

express

A PUBLICATION OF **The Washington Post** | LIVE ALL DAY AT WWW.READEXPRESS.COM | DECEMBER 12, 2007 | >>**FREE**<<

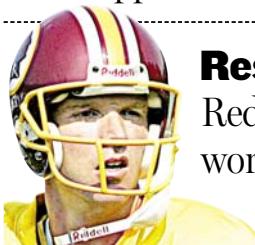
Wednesday



Downd tree limbs are cleared in Salina, Kan.

Glazed Over: Ice storm cuts power across the Midwest | **6**

Rate Expectations: Fed's cut disappoints the markets | **10**



Rest Stop:
Redskins get to work after four days off | **12**

ENTERTAINMENT

Man in Black:

A product of 'The State' and a jokester with love for '80s takes himself on tour.

>> **17-21**



Twin Bomb Blasts Kill at Least 26 in Algeria



SHATTERED: Rescuers and forensics experts work at the site of a bomb blast in Algiers on Tuesday, where twin car bombs sheared off the facades of U.N. offices and a government building, killing at least 26 people, including two U.N. employees. ♦ **Al-Qaeda link:** Terror group claims responsibility | **Page 7**

Scientist: 'Arctic Is Screaming'

Data show ice melt exceeding climatologists' dire forecasts

WASHINGTON | An already relentless melting of the Arctic greatly accelerated this summer, a warning sign that some scientists worry could mean global warming has passed an ominous tipping point. One even speculated that summer sea ice would be gone in five years.

Greenland's ice sheet melted nearly 19 billion tons more than the previous high mark, and the volume of Arctic sea ice at summer's end was half what it was just four years earlier, according to new NASA satellite data

obtained by The Associated Press.

"The Arctic is screaming," said Mark Serreze, senior scientist at the government's snow and ice data center in Boulder, Colo.

Just last year, two top scientists surprised their colleagues by projecting that the Arctic sea ice was melting so rapidly that it could disappear entirely by the summer of 2040.

This week, after reviewing his own new data, NASA climate scientist Jay Zwally said: "At this rate, the Arctic Ocean could be nearly

ice-free at the end of summer by 2012."

So scientists in recent days have been asking themselves these questions: Was the record melt seen all over the Arctic in 2007 a blip amid relentless and steady warming? Or has everything sped up to a new climate cycle that goes beyond the worst-case scenarios presented by computer models?

What happens in the Arctic has implications for the rest of the world. Faster melting there means eventual sea level rise and more immediate changes in winter weather because of less sea ice. **SETH BORENSTEIN (AP)**



DO YOU THINK IT'S TOO LATE FOR HUMANS TO SLOW THE PACE OF GLOBAL WARMING? **A YES B NO**

eyeOpeners

SWASHBUCKLE

Errol Flynn Held On Weapons Charge

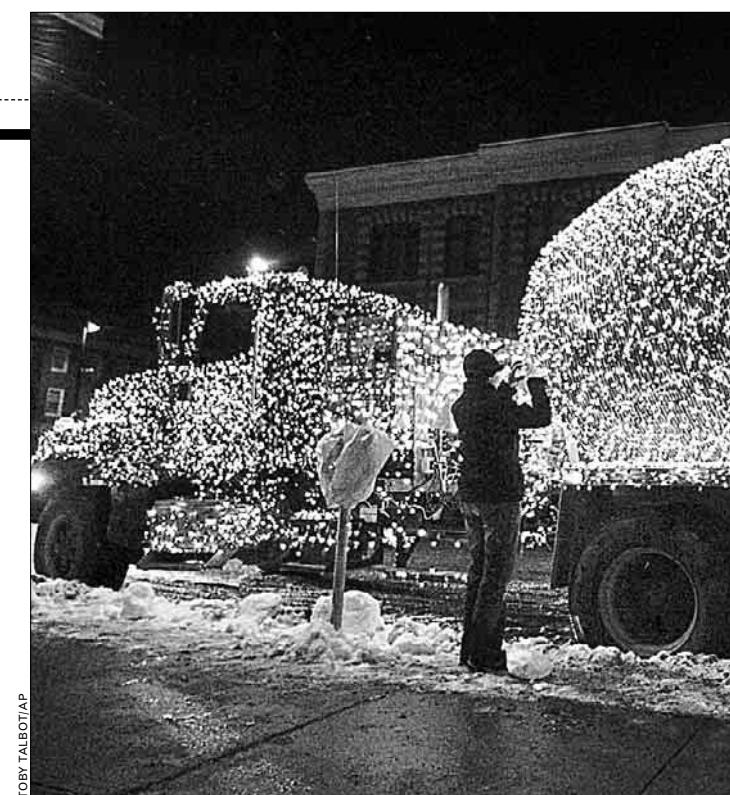
A man appearing for jury duty was arrested after security discovered that his cane concealed a 2 1/2-foot-long sword and 6-inch-long dagger, police said. Vladislav Lisetskiy, 40, was arrested Monday in Brooklyn as he attempted to pass through security, police said. Officers became suspicious even before the standard X-ray procedure. "This one attracted attention because of the way it looked," said Maj. Luz Bryan. "It had two metal bands. It's an indication that something is concealed. My officers noticed it right away." "He kept saying that he didn't know it was illegal," Bryan said. Lisetskiy was charged with misdemeanor criminal possession of a weapon. State law prohibits concealed blades or knives. (AP)



GRANDMAS

Ready for Stray Threads, Unsliced Cake, Gang Warfare

A 63-year-old Pennsylvania grandmother was out of jail Monday after deputies arrested her Sunday for trying to enter Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom with a loaded handgun, knife and scissors. Orange County, Fla., records show that Mary Ann Richardson posted a \$2,000 bail after deputies charged her with carrying a concealed weapon inside the theme park with her grandchildren. Richardson told investigators that she traveled with the silver Beretta .32-caliber semiautomatic handgun. The gun was loaded with seven live rounds in the magazine, but the chamber was empty. "I live alone where I'm at," Richardson said. "Keeping the pistol available is important to me." (AP)



TOBY TALBOT/AP

TRADITIONS

Gravel Rouser

There's something extremely poignant about a Christmas cement mixer. The S.T. Griswold & Company Holiday Truck stops all over Vermont in December; there's a schedule at Stgriswold.com. There's also a hotline. Yes, a hotline: 800-339-4565 x260. The mixer is fully operational — the lights are powered in such a way that the cords don't tangle as the drum rotates. Vermont copycat S.D. Ireland now has a truck, too, according to WCAX-TV News. (EXPRESS)

FILMMAKING

'I Saw It All Remixed To a Techno Beat ...'

When a robber started taking cash from Dunkin' Donuts employee Dustin Hoff-

mann's register over the weekend, Hoffmann clobbered him with a ceramic mug. But Hoffmann, of Elmwood Park, N.J., was mainly worried about how he'd look on YouTube. "That the security tape was either going to show me run away and

hide... or whack this guy in the head," he said. Hoffmann said he'll post the surveillance video on YouTube. "There are only a few videos like that now, so mine's going to be the best," he said. "That'll teach this guy." (AP)

Advertisement

Special Report solves the "My home isn't selling" problem

WASHINGTON METRO — A "Special Report" explodes what its author exposes as "The myth of slow home sales." In fact, the Report explains, in clear and plain English, how a home owner who wants to sell can not only count on a sale within 120 days but can be guaranteed that the sale will occur.

The Report proves its accuracy by quoting specific local instances in which the technique it describes has sold homes time after time, quickly, efficiently, and at a favorable price.

The author of the report, noted realtor Frank Sanya, has made numerous appearances on both television and radio.

Mr. Sanya states that the Report represents the compendium of his many years of real estate experience and can be of substantial value to homeowners, especially those whose homes have been on the market unsold for a considerable period of time. The author emphasizes that although he does not accept every listing, by following the Report's procedures he accomplishes a sale in every instance in which he is the broker of record.

The secret, says the Report, is a combination of traits and procedures that consistently result in a successful sale. For a free copy of the Report, go to a private but available Web site — www.WantItSoldNow.com.

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SMALL DIFFERENCE: Standard & Poor, which analyzed data for U.S. News & World Report's inaugural ranking of America's top 100 schools, made a mistake in calculating the score for Montpelier High School when it was ranked at No. 5. The school is in the top 500, not five.

Nation

New Crack Guidelines Retroactive

Commission votes to let inmates seek a shorter sentence

WASHINGTON | The U.S. Sentencing Commission voted unanimously Tuesday to allow about 19,500 federal prison inmates, most of them black, to seek reductions in their crack cocaine sentences.

The commission, which sets guidelines for federal prison sentences, decided to make retroactive its recent easing of recommended sentences for crack offenses.

Most of those eligible could receive no more than a two-year cut in their prison terms, but roughly 3,800 inmates could be released from prison within a year after the March 3 effective date of Tuesday's decision. Federal judges will have the final say whether to reduce sentences.

The commission took note of objections raised by the Bush administration, but said there is no basis to treat convicts sentenced before the guidelines were changed differently from those sentenced after the changes.

U.S. District Judge William Sessions of Vermont, a commission member, said the vote on retroactivity will have the "most dramatic impact on African-American families" and a failure to act "may be taken by some as particularly unjust." (AP)

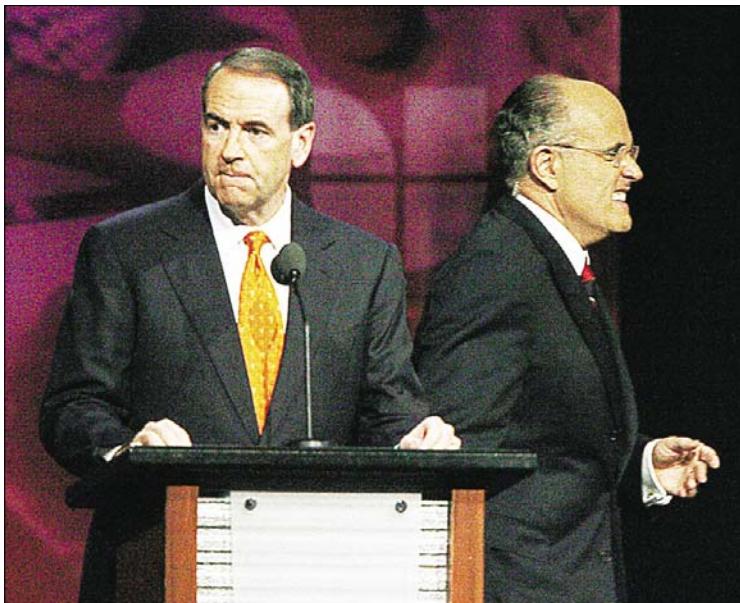
Poll Shows Split Among GOP Voters

Huckabee continues to gain on Giuliani 3 weeks before Iowa

Three weeks before the first contest of the 2008 campaign, Republicans remain sharply divided over whom to choose as their presidential nominee and which of the five leading candidates best embodies the core values of a fractured GOP, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll.

Former New York mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani continues to lead the Republican field in the national poll, but his support is at its lowest point this year. Mike Huckabee, the former Arkansas governor, has more than doubled his support among likely GOP voters since early November and runs just behind Giuliani.

Former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney, former Sen. Fred D. Thompson, of Tennessee, and Sen. John McCain, Arizona, also draw double-digit support in the new poll, hinting at a potential free-for-all when the voting begins



Republican presidential hopeful former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, left, is gaining on former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, right, in a new Washington Post poll. AP

in Iowa and New Hampshire early next month.

The Democratic race nationally continues to feature Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (N.Y.) far ahead of Sen. Barack Obama (Ill.) and the rest of the field. But a highly competitive campaign in Iowa pitting Clinton,

Obama and former senator John Edwards (N.C.), along with signs of a tightening contest in New Hampshire, suggests that the Democratic race is also far from settled.

 **Meet the candidate:** In the Post's continuing profiles of both parties' front-runners, the life and career of Fred Thompson are examined. | Today's Post, Page A1

Charges Likely in Fake Kidnapping

TOLEDO, OHIO | An attorney and former city councilwoman was getting treatment after admitting she fabricated her tale of being kidnapped at gunpoint last week, her husband said

Tuesday. Police said she likely will be charged with filing a false report.

Karyn McConnell Hancock never was abducted outside Toledo's juvenile court building last Wednesday or forced into a car. Instead, she drove to the Atlanta area, where she was found outside an amusement park, police said. (AP)

6 Students Shot After Exiting Bus

LAS VEGAS | Six junior high or high school students were shot Tuesday after they got off a school bus, and two were critically hurt, police said.

Gunshots rang out in northeast Las Vegas just before 2 p.m., Officer

Bill Cassell said. Six young people were transported to area hospitals. Four had minor gunshot injuries and two were in critical condition, Cassell said. At least two people are believed to have taken part in the shootings, he said. (AP)

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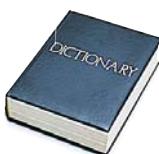
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Nation



LETTERS ARE SO LAST YEAR: "Woot," a hybrid of letters and numbers used by gamers as an exclamation of happiness or triumph, topped all other terms in the Merriam-Webster's Word of the Year online poll that best sums up 2007.

Hayden Grilled on Destroyed Tapes

An ex-CIA agent says waterboarding was approved at the top

WASHINGTON | CIA Director Michael Hayden's explanation Tuesday of how videotapes of terror suspect interrogations were made, then destroyed, left many questions unanswered, said Intelligence Committee Chairman Jay Rockefeller.

The West Virginia Democrat called his panel's 90-minute closed-door session with Hayden "a useful and not yet complete hearing" and vowed the committee would get to the bottom of the matter. Among lingering questions: Who authorized destruction of the tapes, and why wasn't Congress told about it?

Hayden told reporters afterward that he had "a chance to lay out the narrative, the history of why the tapes were destroyed" and the process that led to that decision. But since the taping was done under one of his predecessors, George Tenet, and were



SUSAN WALSH/AP

CIA Director Michael Hayden answers questions before testifying in front of a Senate committee Tuesday about the destruction of interrogation videotapes.

destroyed under another, Porter Goss, he wasn't able to completely answer all questions, he said.

"Other people in the agency know about this far better than I," Hayden said, and promised the

committee he would make those witnesses available. A similar session is set for Wednesday, when Hayden appears before the panel's House counterpart.

The hearing came as a former

CIA agent who was part of the interrogation team went public with his account, saying the waterboarding of a top al-Qaeda figure was approved at the top levels of the U.S. government.

According to the former agent, waterboarding of terror suspect Abu Zubaydah got him to talk in less than 35 seconds. The technique, which critics say is torture, probably disrupted "dozens" of planned al-Qaeda attacks, said John Kiriakou, a leader of the team that captured Zubaydah, a major al-Qaeda figure.

Kiriakou did not explain how he knew who approved the interrogation technique but said such approval comes from top officials.

"This isn't something done willy-nilly. This isn't something where an agency officer just wakes up in the morning and decides he's going to carry out an enhanced technique on a prisoner," he said Tuesday. "This was a policy made at the White House, with concurrence from the National Security Council and Justice Department." PAMELA HESS (AP)

Autopsy Shows Colo. Gunman Killed Himself

COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO. | The man who killed four people at a church and missionary training center shot himself in the head and died after being hit by shots from a church security officer, police said Tuesday.

Matthew Murray, 24, was struck multiple times by a security officer at New Life Church Sunday, but his death was ruled a suicide, the El Paso County Coroner's Office concluded after an autopsy.

Volunteer security guard Jeanne Assam shot Murray after he entered the church. Though investigators had earlier suggested he killed himself, they credited Assam's bravery with averting a greater tragedy. (AP)



BY THE NUMBERS: Silda Wall Spitzer, wife of N.Y. Gov. Eliot Spitzer, helped unveil a mass of \$1 million in pennies in a display at Rockefeller Center on Monday. (AP)

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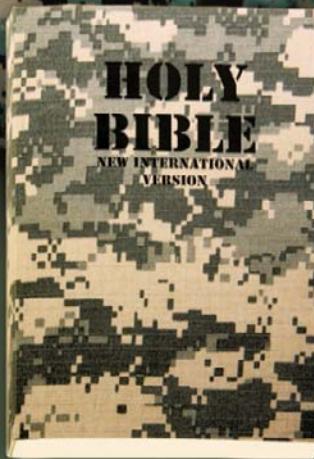
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Real Needs. Real Results.

Nation



Ryan Shaw of Holton, Kan., uses a chain saw to remove tree limbs from his neighbor's car on Tuesday. An ice storm has left much of the Midwest without power.

Storm Cuts Power To Nearly 1 Million

At least 23 fatalities reported as Midwest copes with deep freeze

DES MOINES, IOWA | A thick glaze of ice brought down power lines and cut electricity to close to a million homes and businesses, closed schools and canceled flights Tuesday as a major storm blasted the nation's midsection. At least 23 deaths had been blamed on the storm system since the waves of sleet and freezing rain started during the weekend.

Officials in Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma had declared states of emergency. President Bush declared an emergency in Oklahoma on Tuesday, ordering federal aid to supplement state and local response efforts.

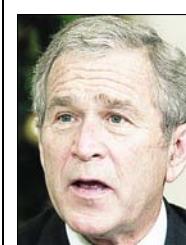
A shell of ice as much as an inch thick covered trees, power lines, streets and car windshields Monday

in parts of Oklahoma and Missouri, with thinner layers elsewhere. About an inch of ice was expected Tuesday over parts of Iowa, followed by up to 5 inches of sleet and snow.

"This is a big one. We've got a massive situation here, and it's probably going to be a week to 10 days before we get power on to everybody," said Ed Bettinger, a spokesman for Public Service Company of Oklahoma.

Nearly 600,000 Oklahoma homes and businesses still had no electricity Tuesday, most of them since Monday when power lines began snapping under the weight of ice and falling branches — the biggest power outage in state history. Utilities in Missouri reported about 170,000 homes and business without power. Outages elsewhere affected more than 100,000 customers in Kansas, more than 60,000 in Iowa and nearly 18,000 in Illinois. JAMES BELTRAN (AP)

HEARSAY | IRAN NUKEs



"Iran is dangerous. We believe Iran had a secret military weapons program, and Iran must explain to the world why they had a program."

—PRESIDENT BUSH

WARNING IRAN THAT ANY EFFORT TO BUILD ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM MUST BE STOPPED "FOR THE SAKE OF WORLD PEACE."



CUE THE 'JAWS' MUSIC: A New Zealand surfer had two encounters with sharks on the same day at a beach near the tourist town of Kaikoura, the Marlborough Express reported Tuesday. The surfer, Olivia Hislop, was not hurt.

World

In Brief

LIMA, PERU

Court Sentences Former Peru President to 6 Years in Prison

Former President Alberto Fujimori was convicted and sentenced to six years in prison



Fujimori

on Tuesday on a charge of abuse of authority stemming from an illegal search he ordered as his government imploded in scandal seven years ago. Supreme Court Judge Pedro Guillermo Urbina declared that Fujimori was guilty of abusing his power when he ordered an aide to pose as a prosecutor and search an apartment without a warrant in November 2000. (AP)

GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA

New Adoption Law Doesn't Apply to Pending Cases

Guatemalan legislators approved a new law Tuesday that tightens adoptions while allowing pending cases to go through without meeting stricter requirements. The new law will enable Guatemala to comply with the Hague Convention, an international agreement designed to protect adopted children from human trafficking. Guatemala is the largest source of babies for U.S. families after China. (AP)

BALI, INDONESIA

U.N. Chief Urges Action as Climate Negotiators Struggle

Delegates at the U.N. climate conference struggled to agree Tuesday on whether to call on rich nations to cut greenhouse gas emissions by specific amounts. U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon urged quick action in confronting global warming. (AP)

Algiers Bombings Tied to al-Qaeda

Twin attacks on U.N. offices and government building kill at least 26

ALGIERS, ALGERIA | An affiliate of al-Qaeda attacked U.N. offices and a government building in Algiers with twin truck bombings Tuesday, killing at least 26 people in carefully timed blasts that drew swift international condemnation.

The targeting of United Nations offices was a new development in Algeria's 15-year battle against Islamic insurgents, who previously focused their hate on symbols of Algeria's military-backed government and civilians. A U.N. official said at least 10 U.N. workers died.

Al-Qaeda's self-styled North African branch, in a posting on a militant Web site, said two suicide bombers attacked the buildings with trucks carrying 1,760 pounds of explosives each. It described the U.N. offices as "the headquarters of the international infidels' den." The other target, Algeria's Constitutional Council, rules on the constitutionality of laws and



Police and rescuers work near the site of a building destroyed by al-Qaeda-linked suicide bombers in Algiers on Tuesday.

A Shaken Algeria

→ Tuesday's attack could rank as one of the worst in the capital city since Algeria won independence from France in 1960. | [A Section](#)

IN **The Washington Post**

oversees elections.

"This is another successful conquest ... carried out by the Knights of the Faith with their blood in defense of the wounded nation of Islam," said the statement, which claimed that 110 people were killed.

Algerian Interior Minister Noureddine Yazid Zerhouni said the government was "certain" that al-Qaeda's North Africa affiliate — formerly known as the Salafist Group for Call and Combat — "was behind the attack." HASSANE MEFTAH (AP)

Medvedev Urges Putin to Become PM in March

Loyalist endorsed by Putin in presidential contest returns favor

MOSCOW | The day after President Vladimir Putin threw his colossal political weight behind a loyal aide in the 2008 presidential race, the aide returned the favor Tuesday, urging Putin to accept the post of prime minister.

After a series of improbable twists, Russia's political course — for years the source of speculation and uncertainty — suddenly seems to have been carved in the red granite on Lenin's Tomb.

If he chooses, Putin appears ready to retain effective power for the next several years — and possibly far beyond that.

On Monday, Putin endorsed Dmitry Medvedev, a first deputy

prime minister who has faithfully served Putin since the Russian leader's days in St. Petersburg city hall, in the March 2 presidential contest.

With the Kremlin's money, media and political machinery behind him, Medvedev seems

assured to win.

On Tuesday, Medvedev pressed Putin to accept the post of prime minister — although Putin, who always seems to be testing the political waters, has pointedly not yet accepted.

The final piece of Russia's political jigsaw puzzle — acceptance of the offer — seems likely to fall into place in the next few days.

DOUGLAS BIRCH (AP)



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World



RAIL SERVICE REVIVED: Regular freight train service between North and South Korea resumed for the first time in more than 50 years on Tuesday. The train is scheduled to make a 10-mile round-trip journey every weekday.

Israeli Incursion in Gaza Kills 5

Broadest offensive by Israel since June threatens peace talks

KHAN YOUNIS, GAZA STRIP | Israeli tanks and bulldozers pushed into the southern Gaza Strip on Tuesday, killing five Islamic militants and trapping hundreds of people in their homes, while another extremist died from an airstrike elsewhere in the territory.

The incursion — Israel's broadest since Hamas seized control of the coastal strip last June — came a day before the first Israeli-Palestinian peace talks in seven years, casting a pall over the negotiations and underscoring the threat that Hamas poses to any accord.

Palestinian officials said the offensive, along with a construction



Palestinian women and a child flee as Israeli army tanks, not pictured, launch an incursion on Tuesday in the southern Gaza Strip. Five Islamic militants were killed.

project in the Har Homa neighborhood of disputed east Jerusalem, threatened to sabotage the talks. They said the plan to build 307 apartments in the traditionally Arab area would dominate Wednesday's meeting.

In Tuesday's operation, Israeli army forces pushed about a mile along the main road in southern Gaza at dawn, taking up positions across a 2.5-mile stretch of land. Israeli forces withdrew after nightfall, the military said.

Among Israel's targets was a multistory building that sustained heavy damage in fighting. The rubble held three bodies, including the severed legs of a dead militant. As rescuers pulled the bodies away, two Israeli shells struck the building seconds apart, sending people scrambling for cover. **IBRAHIM BARZAK (AP)**

China, U.S. Sign Agreements on Product Safety

BEIJING | China and the U.S. signed agreements Tuesday to increase safeguards over Chinese products and to open up mid-sized Chinese cities to American imports, a move aimed at assuaging critics of Beijing's massive trade surplus.

The agreements came at the start of a series of talks that Washington hopes will yield progress on increasing U.S. exports to China.

Washington's trade deficit with China will likely surpass last year's record of \$233 billion, according to U.S. Commerce Department figures, amplifying calls in Congress for punishing legislation over what some call unfair Chinese trade practices. China also announced that its global trade surplus totaled \$26.28 billion in November. **(AP)**

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Overall rank among the U.S.' busiest airports, out of 15, of Ronald Reagan National Airport in healthiest airport meal options, according to the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. The group found that just 42 percent of restaurants at National Airport featured a healthy meal.

Local

Va. Police to Open Cyber Crime Lab

Center aims to keep up with digital forensic evidence demands

RICHMOND, VA. | The Virginia State Police on Tuesday announced plans for a new cyber crimes investigation center to keep up with the rapidly growing demand for digital forensic evidence analysis.

The Virginia Digital Forensics Laboratory is the result of a collaboration launched earlier this year between state police, Virginia Commonwealth University and the National White Collar Crime Center.

As technology becomes more advanced, so, too, do criminals. Embezzlers often leave computer trails of their activities, some gangs have their own Web sites, and most suspects have cellphones.

"The bad guys have all of these gizmos and tools and toys that we



Richard William of the State Police Computer Evidence Recovery Unit, holds up a hard drive he was working on Tuesday at Virginia State Police headquarters in Richmond.

have," said Lt. Col. Robert Northern, deputy superintendent of the state police. "Thus, the digital age creates

all kinds of new challenges for law enforcement and has literally changed the way that we do business."

The Lotteries

Tuesday, Dec. 11

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|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Mid-day Lucky Numbers | 9-3-7 |
| Evening Lucky Numbers (Mon.) | 5-5-7 |
| Mid-day DC 4 | 0-4-9-1 |
| Evening DC 4 (Mon.) | 0-9-4-9 |
| Rolling Cash Five (Mon.) | 2-7-12-14-23 |
| Daily 6 (Mon.) | 1-5-19-20-32-37 Bonus: 31 |

All winning numbers are official only when validated at a lottery ticket location or a lottery claims office. Drawings that occur after Express's deadline will be published two days later.

MARYLAND

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Mid-day Pick 3 | 5-8-8 |
| Evening Pick 3 (Mon.) | 4-4-9 |
| Mid-day Pick 4 | 5-7-1-2 |
| Evening Pick 4 (Mon.) | 9-9-9-2 |
| Match 5 (Mon.) | 11-15-29-30-31 Bonus: 19 |

VIRGINIA

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Mid-day Pick 3 | 8-4-6 |
| Evening Pick 3 (Mon.) | 7-8-7 |
| Mid-day Pick 4 | 7-4-2-8 |
| Evening Pick 4 (Mon.) | 1-7-7-4 |
| Mid-day Cash 5 | 7-19-25-26-32 |
| Evening Cash 5 (Mon.) | 1-11-14-33-34 |

Metro to Restore Off-Peak Service

After hollers of protest from riders, Metro officials have reversed an unpopular decision to cut train service on weekends and weekday off-peak hours and restored service to its original levels, effective Tuesday.

Metro will no longer run four-car trains on the weekends or mid-day off-peak, officials said. Instead, Metro will return to running six-car trains on the weekends, and mostly

With an increasing reliance on digital forensics comes an increasing need for skilled examiners who can sift through the evidence — and adequate space to analyze it.

The new lab will ideally be about 10 times larger and have space for 25 examiners, said state police Sgt. Robert Keeton, director of the current lab. Training will also be a big part of the new facility, which will include classroom space and will host VCU interns.

Officials are still working to secure funding for the project and are waiting on final approval from the U.S. Department of Justice, said police spokeswoman Corinne Geller.

The Computer Evidence Recovery Unit currently handles about 100 cases per year for federal, state and local authorities. Examiners at the lab have looked at the equivalent of 7 million paper documents this year alone, Keeton said. (AP)

Army Halts Munitions Dig in NW

Corps of Engineers to reassess safety of excavation operation

WASHINGTON | The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has halted its search for World War I chemical weapons at an excavation pit near American University while it assesses whether safety procedures are adequate for munitions that are being uncovered, officials said.

The review was prompted by the preliminary analysis of an artillery round discovered about three weeks ago in the pit in an affluent area of Northwest Washington.

A metal containment structure was built over the pit with blast-resistant walls, along with a decontamination tent. The Army's safety procedures assume a worst-case scenario involving the release of arsine, a toxic chemical agent from a 75mm artillery round that was not configured to explode.

But Corps officials said they do not know whether the artillery round recently discovered is explosively configured.

The excavation began in October. It is the fourth dig on or near the campus in nearly 15 years following the discovery of disposal pits from the Army's former chemical warfare testing facility at the university. (AP)

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Money



'TIS THE SEASON: About 7,000 post offices will be open for extended hours during the holiday season, the Postal Service said Tuesday. It expects nearly 1 billion cards, letters and packages to be mailed Dec. 17, the busiest day of the season.

Dow Skids After Fed Lowers Rate

Disappointed traders send Wall Street to a loss of more than 290

NEW YORK | Wall Street plunged Tuesday after the Federal Reserve lowered interest rates by a quarter-point, disappointing investors who hoped the Fed would move more aggressively to help the economy overcome the credit and mortgage crisis. The Dow Jones industrial average skidded more than 290 points.

Investors had been expecting policymakers would cut rates for a third straight time, though there was debate over the size of the cut. Most economists had been expect-

ing a quarter-point cut in the benchmark federal funds rate to 4.25 percent — but some investors were hoping for a half-point cut in the Fed's last meeting this year.

Wall Street had barreled higher the past two weeks, propelling the Dow up 640 points, partly on rising optimism that the Fed would do all it could to prevent the economy from slipping into recession. While the Fed indicated Tuesday it was doing exactly that, the market's expectations had run well ahead of the central bank's view of the economy and what it needed.

Fed officials did signal that further cuts are possible if a severe downturn in housing and a crisis in mortgage lending worsen. (AP)

Market Action

New York Stock Exchange

Gainers

| STOCK | LAST | DAILY CHANGE | DAILY PERCENT CHANGE |
|------------|-------|--------------|----------------------|
| BlueLinx | 4.68 | +.47 | +11.2 |
| Triple-S n | 17.41 | +1.54 | +9.7 |
| AryMerit | 12.25 | +1.00 | +8.9 |
| FeldmM If | 3.64 | +.29 | +8.7 |
| NovaStr rs | 3.83 | +.27 | +7.6 |

Losers

| STOCK | LAST | DAILY CHANGE | DAILY PERCENT CHANGE |
|-----------|-------|--------------|----------------------|
| Tefron | 3.50 | -1.29 | -26.9 |
| NCI Bld | 28.12 | -7.66 | -21.4 |
| WCI Cmmts | 3.83 | -.98 | -20.4 |
| StdPac | 3.34 | -.60 | -15.2 |
| SecCapAs | 6.97 | -1.23 | -15.0 |

Rates

| | CURRENT | PREVIOUS WEEK |
|-----------------|---------|---------------|
| Prime Rate | 7.25 | 7.50 |
| Fed Funds close | 4.25 | 4.44 |
| 3-month disc | 2.88 | 2.99 |
| 2-year | 2.94 | 2.87 |
| 10-year | 4.00 | 3.88 |
| 30-year | 4.48 | 4.34 |

NASDAQ Stock Market

Gainers

| STOCK | LAST | DAILY CHANGE | DAILY PERCENT CHANGE |
|----------|-------|--------------|----------------------|
| GenesMcr | 8.49 | +3.09 | +57.2 |
| BluDolp | 2.16 | +.64 | +42.1 |
| BrdwyF | 10.47 | +2.87 | +37.8 |
| LOUD | 7.81 | +1.53 | +24.4 |
| Iomai | 1.24 | -.03 | -2.4 |

Losers

| STOCK | LAST | DAILY CHANGE | DAILY PERCENT CHANGE |
|--------------|-------|--------------|----------------------|
| UltraSalon n | 20.91 | -6.59 | -24.0 |
| Medarex | 10.56 | -2.79 | -20.9 |
| ADA-ES | 7.67 | -1.63 | -17.5 |
| TriadGty | 8.80 | -1.73 | -16.4 |
| Nuvelo | 2.16 | -.42 | -16.3 |

Currency (Dollars in foreign currency)

| | TODAY | PREVIOUS DAY | YEAR AGO |
|------------------|---------|--------------|----------|
| British Pound | .4913 | .4887 | .5105 |
| Canadian Dollar | 1.0130 | 1.0073 | 1.1481 |
| European Euro | .6814 | .6797 | .7546 |
| Japanese Yen | 110.82 | 111.67 | 116.88 |
| Mexican Peso | 10.8401 | 10.8058 | 10.8422 |
| Taiwanese Dollar | 32.37 | 32.37 | 32.51 |

DOW

-294.26

-2.14

13432.77

NASDAQ

-66.60

-2.45

2652.35

S&P 500

-38.31

-2.53

1477.65

Media Stocks

| STOCK | LAST | DAILY CHANGE | YEAR TO DATE PERCENT CHAGE |
|------------|-------|--------------|----------------------------|
| CBS B | 26.51 | -.58 | -15.0 |
| ClearChan | 34.94 | -.37 | -1.7 |
| Comcast s | 17.78 | -.57 | -37.0 |
| Comc sp s | 17.75 | -.46 | -36.4 |
| DiracTV | 23.54 | -.79 | -5.6 |
| Disney | 31.76 | -.59 | -5.3 |
| EchoStar | 38.83 | -1.25 | +2.1 |
| GpTelevisa | 24.66 | -.59 | -8.7 |
| NewsCpA | 20.54 | -.43 | -4.4 |
| NewsCpB | 21.39 | -.44 | -3.9 |
| Omnican s | 48.02 | -1.97 | -8.1 |
| Thomson | 38.18 | +.19 | -7.9 |
| TW Cable n | 26.09 | -.29 | -33.0 |
| TimeWarn | 16.91 | -.32 | -22.4 |
| ViacomB | 43.19 | -.44 | +5.3 |

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SKID YOU NOT: Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. has announced plans to sell its headquarters to Industrial Realty Group, a firm that would redevelop the site and lease a new office to the nation's biggest tire maker. The deal would keep Goodyear in Akron, Ohio, where it was founded in 1898.

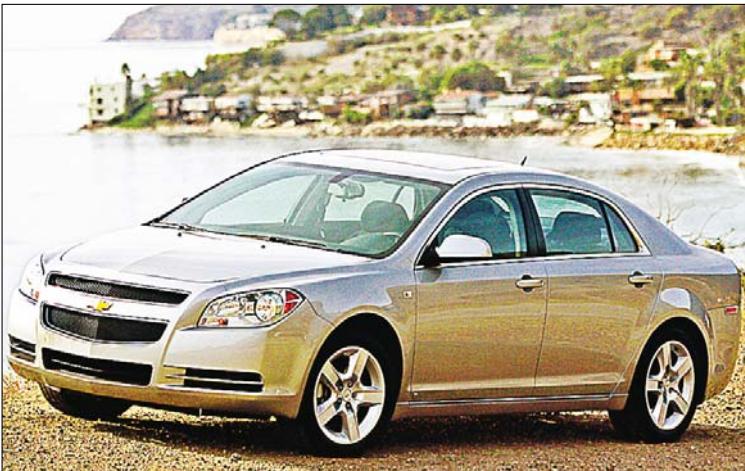
Cars

Average Malibu Does the Trick

2008 Chevy sedan shines in its mid-size, overachieving class

NO BIG DEAL | When I say the 2008 Chevrolet Malibu is a respectable, well-tempered, solidly average car, it's important to remember how high-functioning average is in this class, which includes the Toyota Camry, Honda Accord and Nissan Altima.

When each of your competitors makes a killer car for the money, there is no shame in being average. Average is a glittering triumph. Indeed, in this segment — mid-priced, mid-size four-door, five-passenger front-drive sedan — average is practically an aesthetic unto itself. The new



With competition from the Toyota Camry and Honda Accord, the 2008 Chevy Malibu, which also comes in a hybrid version, does a fine job of being average.

'Bu, built on GM's Opel-engineered Epsilon platform and essentially a mechanical clone of the Saturn

Aura, is a fine-drawn and harmonious design, with a C-pillar traced from Audi's design studies.

This is a major improvement over the previous-generation Malibu, which looked like it was styled on an Etch-a-Sketch by blindfolded barbers.

Slide across the seat and you'll confront an interior composed largely of a densely rubberized and pebbled material and, if the interior is black-on-black, you might feel as if you've slipped into Jacques Cousteau's wet suit. The design is spare, efficient and casually artful.

The other flavor of Malibu is its "mild hybrid" variant, which adds \$1,795 to the price and gains about a 2 mpg advantage. If that seems like a big pivot to suffer for a marginal uptick in economy, the federal government comes to the rescue with a \$1,300 hybrid tax credit. The only thing truly un-average for the new

NUTS & BOLTS

→ THE 2008 CHEVY MALIBU

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Powertrain: 2.4-liter DOHC four-cylinder with variable-valve timing, four-speed automatic transmission, front-wheel drive | **Wheelbase:** 112.3 inches | **Measurements:** 191.8 inches long, 3,200 pounds | **Horsepower:** 169 at 6,400 rpm | **Torque:** 160 at 4,500 | **EPA fuel economy:** 22 mpg city, 30 mpg highway; 24-32, city-highway (hybrid) | **0-60 mph:** 8 seconds

Malibu is its use — kind of astonishing, really — of a four-speed automatic transmission.

In sum, the Malibu is nice-looking, a good value, free of glaring errors, gas-thrifty and comfortable. Average, and I mean that in a good way. DAN NEIL (LOS ANGELES TIMES)



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Sports



"I'd like to be back here if I'm wanted back here. We'll see what goes on." — Bears QB **Rex Grossman**, who is out for the rest of the season after spraining a ligament in his knee.

Rested Redskins Go Back to Work

After a 4-day weekend, 6-7 team is excited by possible playoff berth

REDSKINS | Rock Cartwright did not take a break from football during his mini-bye week. The Washington Redskins return man watched as many games as he could, anxiously keeping up with the playoff implications.

"It was good to see some teams fall off on Sunday," Cartwright said.

The Redskins returned Tuesday from a four-day weekend, relaxed and refreshed after perhaps the most difficult stretch in franchise history. Time is slowly — very slowly — healing the pain from the death of safety Sean Taylor, a tragedy that made a four-game losing streak seem inconsequential.

But there remain rays of hope that something can be made



The Redskins are feeling excited after a win over the Bears and four days of rest.

of the season. The out-of-town scoreboard over the weekend revealed losses for Detroit, Philadelphia, Carolina and Arizona. Those results — along with Washington's 24-16 win over Chicago on Thursday night — have made the Redskins an NFL oddity, a 6-7 team with more than a fanciful shot at the postseason.

"The results have been pretty good for us the last three or four weeks — we just haven't done our part," receiver Antwaan Randle El said.

Not all the Week 14 games went Washington's way. Victories by Minnesota and New Orleans mean the Redskins don't quite control their own destiny. Even so, it's likely that they will claim the NFC's final wild card berth if they win their final three.

"The way the NFC has gone this year, it's a lot of parity, so to speak," linebacker London Fletcher said.

"Where we are right now, having lost four consecutive games and to still be in consideration for a playoff spot, it's a good thing for us."

The race for the final playoff spot essentially involves one 7-6 team (Minnesota) and four 6-7 teams (Washington, New Orleans, Detroit, Arizona). With the Redskins holding the tiebreaker over Detroit and Arizona, the Vikings game is pivotal.

Playoffs? Playoffs? !?

→ Yes, the Redskins are in the hunt for a playoff spot. Will they make it? Take a look at the other contenders and pretenders and decided for yourself. | **Today, Sports**

IN The Washington Post

Well, maybe. First, the Redskins need to beat New York. That's why center Casey Rabach didn't even bother keeping up with Sunday's games.

"I'm looking at the Giants," Rabach said. "It doesn't matter where we're at if we don't win this next game." JOSEPH WHITE (AP)

Top Steelers Defender Out for the Season

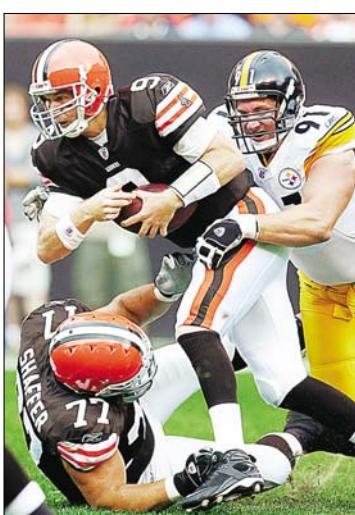
Aaron Smith will be sidelined after tearing biceps against the Pats

NFL | The Pittsburgh Steelers' loss at New England keeps getting worse.

Aaron Smith, one of the Steelers' best defensive players, is out for the rest of the season after he tore a biceps muscle during the 21-point loss to the Patriots on Sunday.

Smith, a defensive end, is an excellent run defender and one of the Steelers' most reliable players since breaking into the NFL as a fourth-round draft pick in 1999. He tried to keep playing during the 34-13 loss, but had to be replaced several times.

Coach Mike Tomlin knew that was a bad sign, and post-game tests revealed the tear. Smith apparently was not hurt on a specific play, but may have gone into the game with a partial tear that became worse



DE Aaron Smith, right, had been one of the Steelers' top run stoppers for years.

as he played.

"Being the guy he is, he continued on," Tomlin said Tuesday. "He came out a few times, and that was worrisome because this guy doesn't come out of games."

ALAN ROBINSON (AP)

First-Year Falcons Coach Resigns

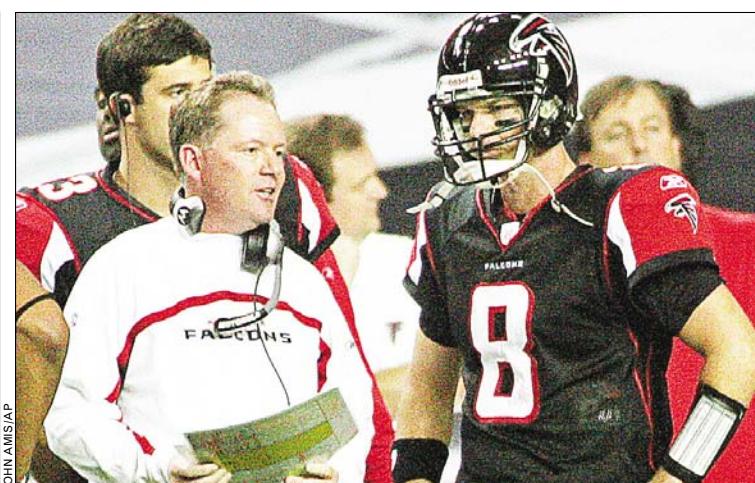
Petrino steps down amid speculation he may return to college

FOOTBALL | Bobby Petrino resigned as Atlanta Falcons coach on Tuesday, the team said. He lasted only 13 games with the NFL team.

Petrino left Louisville to become Falcons coach in January for a five-year, \$24 million contract, largely because Atlanta felt he could help star quarterback Michael Vick reach his full potential.

A few months later, Vick came under investigation for a grisly dogfighting operation that eventually led him to plead guilty to federal charges. He was sentenced Monday to 23 months in prison without ever taking a snap for Petrino.

The person familiar with Petrino's decision requested anonymity because the team has not yet announced it. There was immediate speculation he had quit to take a college job, with Arkansas among the schools seeking a coach.



Coach Bobby Petrino, left, talks with quarterback Chris Redman during Atlanta's loss to New Orleans on Monday night. Petrino resigned as Falcons coach Tuesday.

Arkansas has been looking for two weeks for a coach to replace Houston Nutt, who resigned after a tumultuous season and hours later took the Mississippi job.

After losing Vick, Petrino tried three other starting quarterbacks without success. The Falcons are 3-10 and assured of the 32nd losing season in their 42-year history.

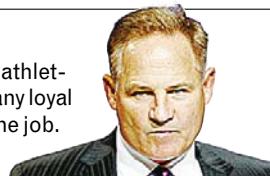
Petrino assembled one of college

football's highest-scoring offenses at Louisville, but the Falcons were anemic without Vick. They also were plagued by injuries on the offensive line.

Just hours after Vick's sentencing in Richmond, Va., Atlanta took its fourth straight double-digit loss, 34-14 to the New Orleans Saints.

"Not a good day," Petrino said afterward. PAUL NEWBERRY (AP)

HOLIDAY SPIRIT: LSU coach Les Miles admitted that he had a meeting with Michigan athletic director Bill Martin but said it was only to help Michigan in its coaching search "just as any loyal alumnus might do." Miles said repeatedly in a statement that he is not a candidate for the job.



Sports

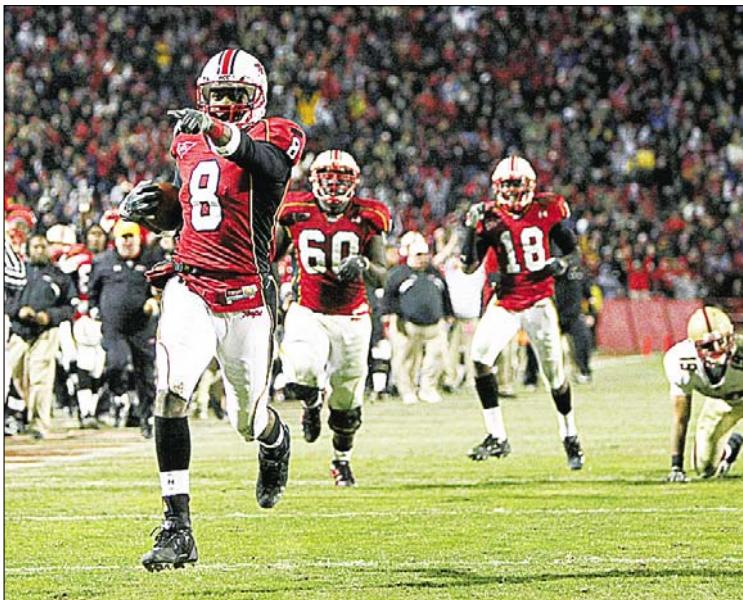
Sunny San Fran. Was Terps' Top Pick

Players excited about heading to California for the Emerald Bowl

TERPS FOOTBALL | Minutes after Maryland became bowl-eligible by hammering North Carolina State on the road last month, coach Ralph Friedgen gathered his players in the locker room and asked them where they wanted to play.

Given the choice of someplace blue, a state they knew and someplace new, the Terrapins overwhelmingly decided upon a trip to San Francisco to play Oregon State in the Emerald Bowl on Dec. 28.

"I've never had a chance to go to the West Coast before," senior defensive tackle Dre Moore said.



Darius Heyward-Bey celebrates a TD during Maryland's win over Boston College.

"This is the one I wanted."

The Terrapins could have chosen to play in the Humanitarian Bowl on the blue field at Boise State University. But few of the players were excited about playing in the chilly Idaho in late December. They could have picked the Meineke Car Care Bowl in Charlotte, N.C. But the excitement level of playing in North Carolina was about as high as a half-inch cleat.

"We've been to Carolina three times this year alone," linebacker Erin Henderson said.

San Francisco, on the other hand, represented something unique. So did a matchup with Oregon State, which plays in the Pac-10.

"It's a little more exotic to go to San Francisco, a place they've never been before," he said. DAVID GINSBURG (AP)

TODAY'S TV LINEUP

CAPITALS (7 P.M. ON COMCAST) Riding a two-game winning streak in which the Caps have actually looked impressive, the home team hosts the Rangers.

COLLEGE HOOPS (7 P.M. ON ESPN2 AND 8 P.M. ON ESPN CLASSIC) You have to be a serious college basketball fan to get into these games. Cincinnati travels to Xavier, and DePaul hosts Vanderbilt.

NBA (8 P.M. AND 10:30 P.M. ON ESPN) Detroit is at Houston, and Utah travels to Phoenix.

SOCER (2:30 P.M. ON ESPN2 AND 5 P.M. ON ESPN CLASSIC) Olympique plays Rangers at Glasgow, and Barcelona hosts Stuttgart.

Surprise: Woods Is PGA's Top Player

Player of the year honor goes to Tiger for 9th time in his 11 seasons

GOLF | Tiger Woods was voted PGA Tour player of the year by his peers Tuesday, the third straight year he won the award and the ninth time in his 11 years as a pro.

Jay Haas was voted Champions Tour player of the year, while Nick Flanagan won the award on the Nationwide Tour.

Woods also won player of the year from the PGA of America,



In his 11 seasons as a pro, Tiger Woods has won player of the year nine times.

a points-based system. The PGA Tour award is a vote, and Phil Mickelson was only other player

on the ballot.

Woods won seven times, including the PGA Championship for his 13th career major. He also won two of the four events in PGA Tour playoffs to capture the inaugural FedEx Cup.

It gave him another sweep of PGA Tour awards named after three of the biggest names in history — the Jack Nicklaus Trophy for player of the year, the Arnold Palmer Award for leading the money list (\$10.8 million) and the Byron Nelson Trophy for having the lowest scoring average (67.79). (AP)

McFadden Is 2-Time All-America

Three others make team for 2nd straight year; Tebow is QB pick

COLLEGE FOOTBALL | When it comes to being an All-American, Darren McFadden doesn't have to settle for second.

The Arkansas running back and two-time Heisman Trophy runner-up was one of four players voted to The Associated Press All-American team for the second consecutive season.

Michigan offensive tackle Jake Long, LSU defensive tackle Glenn Dorsey and Ohio State linebacker James Laurinaitis were the other two-time first-team AP All-Americans on the team released Tuesday.

Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow joins McFadden in the backfield along with Central Florida's Kevin Smith, who leads the nation with 2,448 yards and 30 touchdowns. Smith is the first All-American from UCF, which began playing major college football in 1996.

Missouri quarterback Chase Daniel, who finished fourth in the Heisman voting, was voted to the second team. Hawaii's Colt Brennan, third in the Heisman voting, was the third-team quarterback.

RALPH D. RUSSO (AP)



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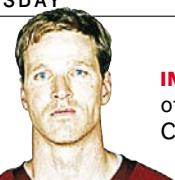
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Sports



IMMEDIATE IMPACT: Redskins QB Todd Collins was chosen as NFC Offensive Player of the week after playing just a little more than a half on Thursday against the Bears. Collins completed 15 of 20 passes for 224 yards and two TDs in Washington's win.

Goal for Newest Nats: Beat the Mets

Lo Duca and Milledge are excited for chance to play their old team

NATIONALS | Catcher Paul Lo Duca agreed to a \$5 million, one-year deal with the Nationals because he felt wanted — and because there will be plenty of chances to face his old club, the New York Mets.

"I'm excited to be part of a team that's young and has a chance to win this division," Lo Duca said Tuesday after passing a physical to make the deal official. "The NL East is wide open."

Asked what his reasons were for choosing the Nationals, Lo Duca said they "wanted me more," and that he wanted to stay in the National League. Then he paused before adding with a smile: "getting to play



THE YOUNG AND THE ... NOT SO YOUNG: The Nats' two biggest offseason pickups, Paul Lo Duca, 35, and Lastings Milledge, 22, were introduced by the team Tuesday.

the Mets 18 times."

In 10 major league seasons with the Dodgers, Marlins and Mets, Lo Duca has batted .288 with 80 homers and 466 RBI.

"He has never been with a losing team. Ever," Washington general manager Jim Bowden said. "He wins. That's what he does."

Another former member of the Mets was introduced by the Nationals at the team's sales and marketing center: outfielder Lastings Milledge, who came over in the trade that sent catcher Brian Schneider and outfielder Ryan Church to New York.

Milledge, 22, hit .272 with seven homers and 29 RBI in 59 games with the Mets in 2007.

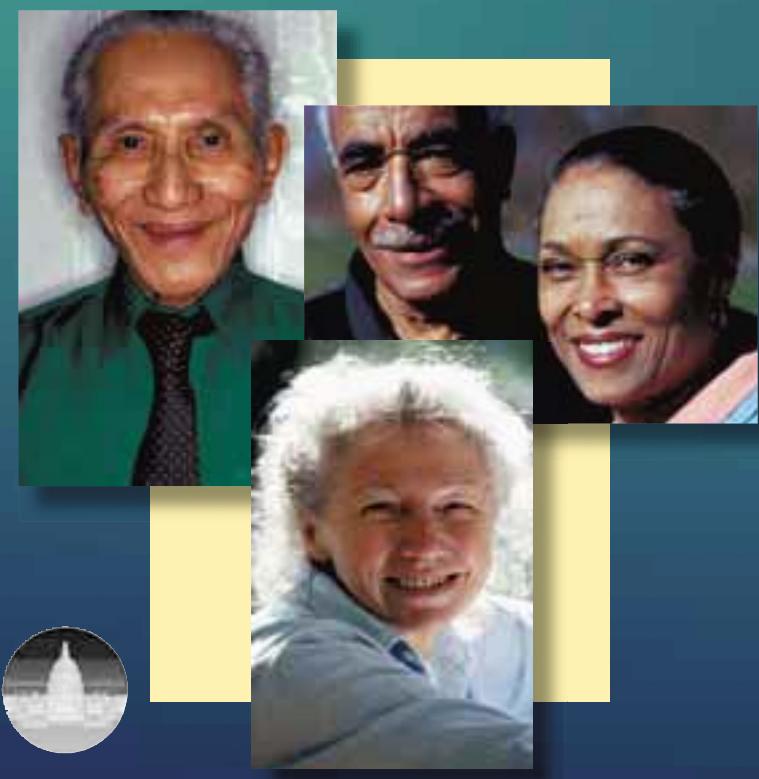
"I'm here to win, and anything else is really a failure to me," Milledge said. HOWARD FENDRICH (AP)

Star Japanese Outfielder Draws Major Interest

BASEBALL | Japanese outfielder Kosuke Fukudome told the Chunichi Dragons he will not return next season, saying he wants to make a move to the major leagues.

Fukudome, who became a free agent last month, informed the Central League club of his decision Tuesday. He is regarded as one of the best outfielders in Japanese professional baseball. The 30-year-old was a key member of the Japan team that won the inaugural World Baseball Classic in 2006.

Fukudome has drawn interest from the Chicago Cubs, the San Diego Padres and the Chicago White Sox. The Padres have made an offer to Fukudome, calling it "one of the two or three biggest offers" in team history. (AP)



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"I fight 'til I die. It's not about giving up or quitting. To me, it's win or die. I literally mean death; I don't mean 'walk away.' I mean death."

— Knicks coach Isiah Thomas, who has been heavily criticized — and heavily booed — by New York fans.



Sports

Swede Success: Rookie Flourishing

Capitals center has hit his stride in the few weeks under Boudreau

CAPITALS | When asked to detail the most difficult part of his transition to the NHL, Capitals rookie Nicklas Backstrom immediately mentioned the speed, the smaller ice surface and the importance of mixing it up near the opponent's goal.

"You have to go to the net more than you have to in Sweden," he said. "Here, it's more like go to the net, shoot and score."

It may be that way for most NHLers, who would have just enough time and composure to throw the puck back toward goal if it came to their stick in the slot.

But not for Backstrom, who displayed his uncanny calm and control in the first period of Monday's win over New Jersey. Standing between two defensemen just a few feet from the Devils net, Backstrom took a loose puck on his backhand, slid it to his left, cradled it and whipped a shot back over the left shoulder of goaltender Kevin Weekes. It was as if there was no



Nicklas Backstrom has hit his stride in the games since Bruce Boudreau took over.

WELL BEYOND HIS YEARS

Caps coach Bruce Boudreau on Backstrom: "He doesn't play like a first-year player." His resume doesn't look like that of a rookie, either:

- Backstrom has had four goals and 15 assists through his first 30 NHL games. That's third-best total among the Caps and among all NHL rookies. His 15 helpers is tied for second on Washington behind Michael Nylander.
- Backstrom has tallied 10 points (three goals, seven assists) since Boudreau took over Nov. 23. That's second in the club behind Ovechkin's 13 points. Backstrom has had his first three multipoint games in that span.
- The Swede represented his country at the IIHF World Championships in 2006 and 2007. This spring, he was tied for fifth on his team with six points (one goal, five assists). In 2006, he helped Sweden to its eighth title.

one else on the ice.

"He's got patience with the puck. He doesn't panic. There's an awful lot of ice in his veins for a guy his age," coach Bruce Boudreau said.

The club's first-round pick in 2006, the smooth-skating Backstrom turned 20 on Nov. 23. That day he scored another highlight-reel goal, lifting the Caps to an overtime victory in Philadelphia in Boudreau's first game. The Swede has had three goals and seven assists since then, more points than he had in his first 21 NHL games. Washington (11-17-2) hosts the New York Rangers (16-12-2) on Wednesday.

"He's getting better every day, and he's getting more confident. That's why he's starting to score some goals," Boudreau said.

The new coach said he'd place Backstrom "in any situation" and has recently asked him to play on a line with Alex Ovechkin and to contribute to the penalty kill.

"You play as much as you can and help the team as much as you can," he said. "You have to take responsibility every time you're on the ice. That's good. I like that."

BRIAN STRAUS

Hall of Fame Induction Helps Validate Holmes

BOXING | He had a boxing resume that could stand beside the greatest in his sport. Yet, Larry Holmes always seemed to have to justify himself as a champion.

There was no need for explanations Tuesday.



Holmes

Joining him were 11 other boxers and ring personalities chosen by members of the Boxing Writers Association and a panel of international historians.

He will be enshrined as the longest reigning world heavyweight champion in boxing history, holding the title for nearly seven years (1978-85). Holmes' 20 successful heavyweight title defenses were surpassed by only Joe Louis with 25. He was on the verge of matching Rocky Marciano's perfect 49-0 mark when he was upset by Michael Spinks for his first loss. (AP)

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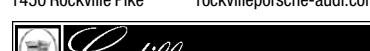
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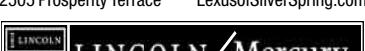


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PHILLY'S MORE FUN



Pennsylvania Ballet

Here are three reasons to make **THIS WEEKEND YOUR WEEKEND** in Philadelphia:

The Nutcracker.

Be the first to see the Pennsylvania Ballet's performance of the timeless holiday ballet at the **Academy of Music**.
■ December 14-31.

Madness Scavenger Hunt.

Go on a whirlwind tour of a French monastery, a Chinese palace, a Pennsylvania Dutch kitchen and more at the **Philadelphia Museum of Art** on December 15. Then, take in the *Renoir Landscapes* exhibition, on view at its only U.S. stop through January 6.

Wine Tasting.

Toast the holidays at **Crossing Vineyards and Winery**. A workshop, tasting and tasting kit make this the perfect holiday treat for you. Or, spend the day touring the eight vineyards that make up the Bucks County Wine Trail.
■ Sunday, December 16.

Photo courtesy of Paul Kolnik/Pennsylvania Ballet

Book your hotel package today at gophila.com/express and get ready for a fun getaway in Philadelphia.



Travel



COLD SHOULDER: Icelandair will end its service at BWI Airport Jan. 13. The airline blames rising costs, shrinking revenues and the departure of thousands of Americans from a military base in Iceland.



QUIET TIME: Unlike the southern coast of Florida, towns like Apalachicola, in the state's panhandle, are void of tourists during the winter months. Why? It's cold.

A Winter Wasteland

Forgotten Coast sees little tourism this time of year due to the cold

DESTINATIONS | They call this part of the Florida Panhandle the Forgotten Coast, and on a cool winter day, it's easy to see why.

Miles of dazzling white beaches stand deserted except for an occasional beachcomber. Hotel rooms are easily available at bargain rates. Restaurateurs look gratefully at those who don't have reservations when they walk in the door.

There is a reason for this, of course. It's cold here, compared to the beaches of Miami or Sanibel Island in southern Florida. There, winter is high season, with full hotels, crowded restaurants and jammed highways. Here, summer is the tourist season, and winter



It's rare to find people strolling along the Apalachicola beaches during the winter.

means quiet and solitude.

Of course, if your home is in the Far North (we live in Montana), there's a word for weather like this — spring! We needed no apologies. We were too busy enjoying ourselves.

We had not set out to make this our destination. We had been visiting relatives near Pensacola and decid-

ed to drive U.S. 98 along the Gulf Coast. We arrived in Apalachicola, in the belly of Florida's Panhandle, in late afternoon, and found ourselves transported back a century.

Beautiful old houses, with broad porches for relaxing in the days before air conditioning, line the city streets. A park established in 1832 beckoned, its grounds filled with

live oaks, their branches draped with Spanish moss.

We wandered the park, admiring its gazebo and grounds, then explored nearby neighborhoods and their gracious Victorian homes. Nearby was the Chestnut Street Cemetery, which dates to 1831. It is slowly decaying, but still legible are the headstones of Confederate soldiers and sailors who defended Apalachicola from a Union blockade in the Civil War, as well as those of townspeople and visitors who died decades before the war began.

We strolled along the beach for hours, meeting only a handful of people, as we sought the perfect seashell, filling plastic grocery bags with candidates. Back home in Montana, they would fill our planters and flowerbeds and ensure that the Forgotten Coast never would be. **WILLIAM KRONHOLM (AP)**

RealDeals

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The package includes round-trip airfare to Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, on a major carrier—most likely American Airlines—and four nights at the all-

inclusive Sun Village Resort & Spa, which means that all meals and drinks (alcoholic and nonalcoholic) are covered. As an all-inclusive resort, Sun Village offers, at no extra charge, numerous activities and non-motorized water sports, including volleyball, kayaking, golfing, snorkeling and surfing. **WHEN:** Jan. 6 through Feb. 1. **DETAILS:** Price is from Miami. Add \$209 for Baltimore departure.

CONTACT: Leisure Link International, 888-801-8808, Eleisurelink.com.

NORTHERN LIGHTS TOURS

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The Northern Lights Winter Adventure package includes three nights' accommodations at the River View Hotel in downtown Whitehorse, the historic capital of the Yukon Territory; nightly guided northern lights viewing tours;

and a two-hour Whitehorse city tour highlighting top attractions and landmarks. **WHEN:** Thursday and Friday departures through April 15, 2008.

DETAILS: Airfare, meals and gratuities are not included. **CONTACT:** Fresh Tracks, 800-667-4744, Fresctracks.ca. **(BUDGET TRAVEL MAGAZINE)**

FIND MORE DEALS & TRIP-PLANNING TIPS AT BUDGETTRAVELONLINE.COM



WAY TO GO, REG! Regis Philbin is taking on more television duties. The host of "Live With Regis and Kelly," who holds the Guinness World Record for the most time spent in front of a TV camera, will host the official Oscar red-carpet show.

Entertainment

Dry, Hot Stand-Up

Michael Ian Black's arid, understated humor hits the road

TOUR | Michael Ian Black: beloved member of cult sketch shows "The State" and "Stella" or from "Wet Hot American Summer." Black performs at Baltimore's Otto-bar on Sunday, in support of "I Am a Wonderful Man," his debut stand-up disc. He took a break from playing a gay demon to talk with Express about film, literature and chicken butts.

You mentioned you were on set. What are you filming right now?

I'm doing a few episodes of the TV show "Reaper." It's on the CW, which is why you've never heard of it. I play a gay demon. Whenever a gay demon role pops up, my name is always on the list.

You wrote a column for McSweeney's, "Michael Ian Black Is a Very Famous Celebrity."

I've liked the McSweeney's site for a long time, and I started writing periodically for them. I also wrote a blog for a while, and between them I started developing a writing style and collecting things for a book. I'm in the middle of writing that right now, and it should come out some-



SOMETHING FOR THE KIDS: When he's not touring or in front of the camera, Black writes children's books on giggle-inducing subjects such as chicken butts.

time next year.

You also have two kids' books coming out. One is called "Chicken Cheeks." Chickens have cheeks?

It's a chicken's butt. I have two kids, ages 6 and 4, and they think butts are funny, so I wrote a book about butts.

Your CD gatefold features a very artful nude photo of you.

It was inspired by the Burt Reynolds laygirl centerfold. There's been nobody I'm aware of quite as awesome as Burt Reynolds. From the top of his "Smokey and the Bandit" cowboy hat to the tip of his "Smokey and the Bandit" cowboy boots.

Have all of the "I Love the ... " VH1 shows been a blessing or a curse?

I wrote about that in one of my McSweeney's pieces. The IRS asked what my occupation was, and I wrote "fundit" and almost killed myself. But I'm a proud fundit. A pundit who makes fun: A fundit.

Sounds like a candy bar.

If I could make people as happy as a candy bar, that would be a life well lived. I only hope I would not give people dental problems. SHAUNA MILLER (EXPRESS)

Today's Top Stops

FOR MORE TOP STOPS AND ENTERTAINMENT FEATURES, VISIT READEXPRESS.COM

MIKAL EVANS BAND Indie Darling



Mikal Evans and her band are a staple of Gypsy Eye Records and play on the Black Cat's backstage tonight with Argos. Express contributor Aaron Leitko spoke with Mikal Evans recently; to read his article, visit us on the Web at readexpress.com.

→ *Black Cat*, 1811 14th St. NW; 9 p.m., \$6; 202-667-7960. (U St.-Cardozo)



CHIHULY ON CHIHULY Toot Horn, Blow Glass

2 Renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly talks about... well, himself. Tonight at the Corcoran, a man who revolutionized contemporary art chats about his work and his new book in a talk titled "Chihuly on Chihuly."

→ *Corcoran Gallery of Art*, 500 17th St. NW; 7 p.m., \$30; 202-639-1700. (Farragut North)

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Entertainment



INTENSITY REAPS REWARDS: Sean Penn's adventure tale "Into the Wild" garnered seven Critics' Choice award nominations on Tuesday, including best picture, best actor for Emile Hirsch and best director for Penn. "Juno" received six nods.

Long-Lasting Love

'Girlfriends' has been feeling the affection for 8 saucy seasons

HIT SERIES | At a time when black sitcoms are losing their luster, the eighth season of "Girlfriends" is worth noting.

The CW comedy about three close-knit L.A. gal pals is the longest-running live-action comedy currently airing on prime-time network television. Though, like other UPN transplants on the CW, it has never hit Nielsen's top 100, "Girlfriends" is the second highest-rated comedy among black viewers (bested only by its 2-year-old spin-off, "The Game").

With 173 episodes shot so far (13 of the 22 for this season were filmed before the Writers Guild strike halted production), "Girlfriends" is just behind "The Cosby Show" with the most episodes produced for a black sitcom.

"And knowing that, if I got one more year, I could beat 'Cosby,'" series creator Mara Brock Akil said with a laugh. "I mean, come on. To be able to say I was right up there with 'Cosby,' that ain't a bad thing."

Not bad, indeed, considering that with ratings down last season, many had suspected the show wouldn't return at all this fall. Akil and the writers even wrote a final episode that tied everything together, including the lovelorn Joan



POPULAR GIRLS: Tracee Ellis Ross, Erykah Badu, Persia White and Golden Brooks.

(Tracee Ellis Ross) getting a marriage proposal.

Though CW executives are not

willing to discuss the possibilities of a renewal until May, when series are picked up for the fall, there is

another contingency plan in place if this season is the last.

"I think fans will be very happy," Akil said.

So, does that mean Joan will finally get married? Akil would only reveal that "when we finally feel like Joan is really OK, I do believe the show is over."

While Akil and cast agree that they would not be opposed to coming back, they'd also be fine if they didn't. With nearly nonexistent promotion, network swaps and the loss of a principal cast member last season, just the fact that the show has endured is what's mattered most.

"It's not that I didn't think we could go this long, but it's totally outside my frame of reference," said Ross, who directed the scheduled Jan. 14 episode. "It was one of those things where I was, like, 'Yeah, this is really good,' but who would ever think? What show goes eight years? It's not something you imagine."

JANICE ROCHELLE LITTLEJOHN (AP)

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Television



BIG FLOP: ABC has benched comedy-drama "Big Shots," a low-rated male version of "Desperate Housewives." The network has pulled the remaining three original episodes of the series starring Michael Vartan and Dylan McDermott, pictured.

Double Trouble

Moms set a tacky example for their progeny on ‘Crowned’

RELATED | The CW could sure use a hit. Can it turn the corner with “Crowned: The Mother of All Pageants” (9 p.m., CW)? This eight-part series treats a mother-daughter beauty pageant like a reality show, inviting 11 pairs of beauty queens to a gaudy mansion with a lot of pink rooms. At least one pair gets eliminated — or “de-sashed” — every episode.

The mother-daughter aspect of "Crowned" more than doubles



MS. & MISS: Mother-daughter teams compete in a reality beauty pageant.

the potential for awkward, nasty and ridiculous behavior. Some of these pairs are gorgeous, some are just vicious and others just don't have a clue.

I'm happy to report that I haven't laughed so much or so hard at a reality show in a very long time. Even the most earnest participants remind me of characters from some Christopher Guest mock documentary. And some of the wicked stage mothers are right out of "Hairspray."

And if the ladies weren't cringe-worthy enough, the judges go out of their way to keep them off-balance. They include former Miss USA Shanna Moakler, TV "personality" Cynthia Garrett and "Queer Eye" star Carson Kressley. KEVIN MCDONOUGH
(UNITED FEATURE SYNDICATE)

ON TV TONIGHT

SQUEALING, TEARS

A winner emerges on the season finale of **AMERICA'S NEXT TOP MODEL** (8 p.m., CW).

GOT LIFE INSURANCE?

An insurance adjuster is put on ice on **PUSHING DAISIES** (8 p.m., ABC).

LOTS OF ACTION

Addison relocates to Los Angeles and misplaces her clothes and dignity on **PRIVATE PRACTICE** (9 p.m., ABC).

HIM AGAIN?

CHRISTMAS IN WASHINGTON (10 p.m., TNT)

OOOH WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

OOOH, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? Heidi tells the contestants that "fashion is transformation," on **PROJECT RUNWAY** (10 p.m., Bravo).



QUEEN BEE: Tyra always makes sure she's the focus on "Top Model."

GOLD FLAKES IN THE NOG

GOLD PLATES IN THE NOG
Rich, tan people celebrate the holidays on **NEWPORT HARBOR: THE REAL ORANGE COUNTY** (10:30 p.m., MTV). KEVIN MCDONOUGH (UNITED FEATURE SYNDICATE)

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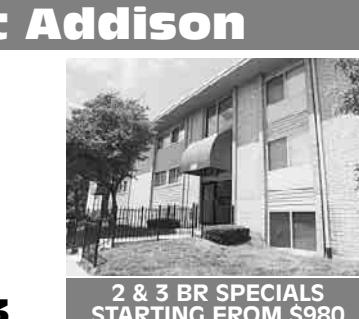
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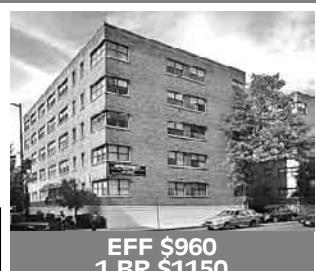
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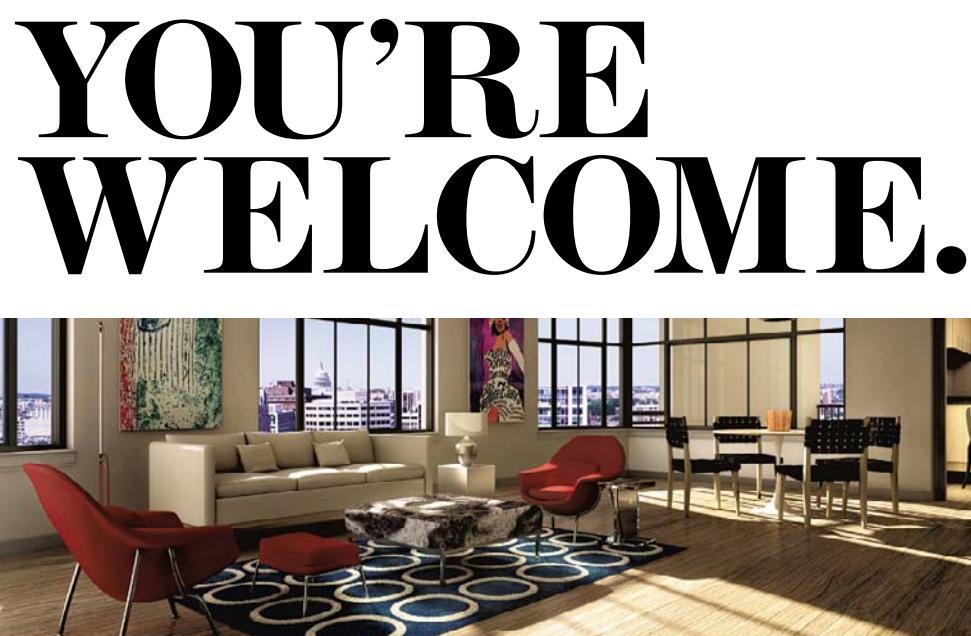
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LOOK out

* TRENDS, CULTURE, DISCOVERIES, IDEAS, PEOPLE



MIND YOUR MANNERS ON THE PLANE: Delta Airlines has unveiled 25 short videos about courtesy in the sky. The humorous clips include lessons on how to tame unruly children and manage a middle-seat bully.

INSIDE

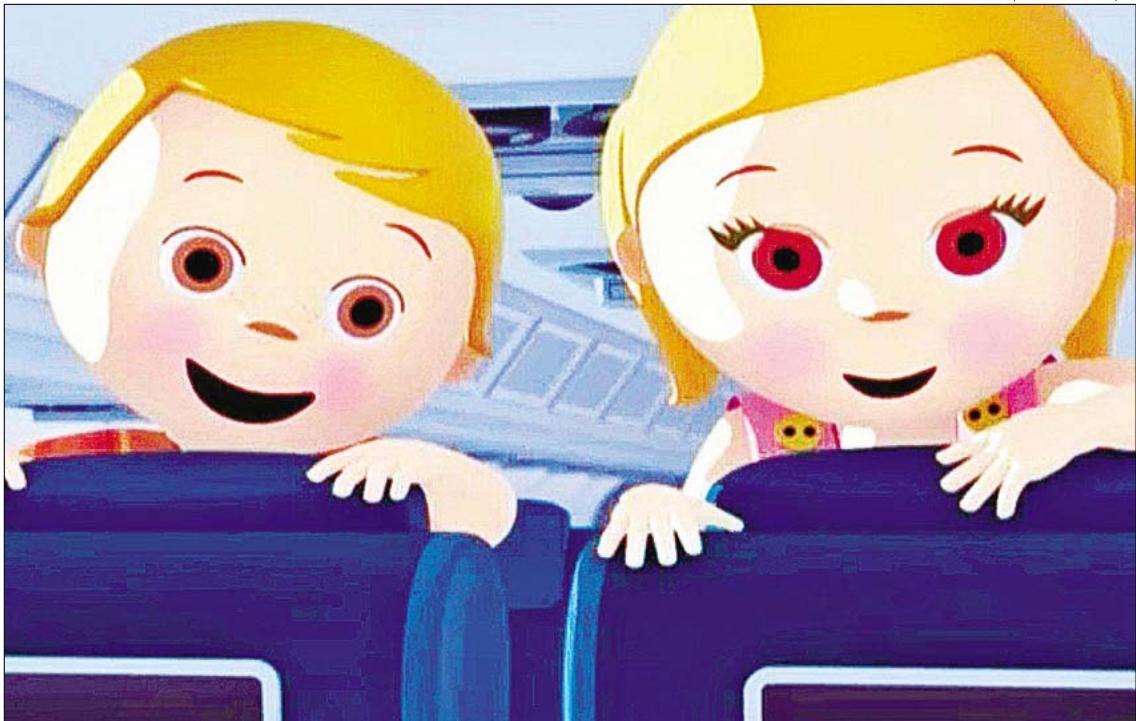
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RIC FELD/DELTA AIRLINES/AP



Fly Friendlier

Travel

Delta's new videos help educate travelers in airplane etiquette

Volumes have been written about how to properly behave at weddings or which fork to use at fancy dinners.

But when it comes to dealing with the neighboring passenger who hogs precious airplane arm space or the unruly kid who won't pipe down on crowded flights, there's precious little out there.

Until now. Delta Air Lines Inc. is trying to raise awareness of behavior in the air by creating an animated series of videos showing passengers confronted with delicate social situations.

The Atlanta-based company is

rolling out "Planeguage: The language of traveling by plane," a series of 25 humorous videos the airline has posted online and introduced on flights this month.

"We understand what you go through as a traveler," said Tim Mapes, Delta's vice president of marketing. "These videos can reinforce, 'Hey, you don't want to be that guy.'"

The snippets include "Middleman," about the middle-seat bully; "Kidtastrophe," depicting unruly tots on planes; "Lav Dance," about the person who bumps into everyone in the airplane aisle while returning from the lavatory; and "Shady Lady," about the passenger who raises or closes the window shade without considering other passengers.

The videos, which were created after Delta officials heard customers talk about experiences aboard planes, are meant to "help raise travelers' consciousness about what it

means to be good travel companions," said spokeswoman Betsy Talton.

Airlines and customers have differed on what it means to be a good traveler. Southwest Airlines Co. was criticized for telling a young woman in July that her outfit was too revealing to fly. Chief Executive Gary Kelly issued an apology to the young woman, Kyla Ebbert, that was read on "The Dr. Phil Show."

"We expect our employees to use good judgment, common sense and good taste, and we feel if our customers do the same we won't have issues on board a flight," said Southwest spokesman Chris Mainz, who said his airline may consider following Delta's lead. "Good judgment serves everyone well. ... Usually, you can find common ground."

Part of the problem is that airlines haven't properly educated the public on what to expect aboard a plane, said Andrew R. Thomas, an

“There has to be some kind of [process] where people can become familiar with the travel experience.”

ANDREW R. THOMAS, TRAVEL EXPERT

to be some kind of [process] where people can become familiar with the travel experience and, hopefully, not while in flight."

The move has been applauded by some Delta passengers, including Larry Pellegrini, a 52-year-old sales executive who said his biggest pet peeve on his weekly flights are passengers who do not cover their mouths when they cough.

"There should be an education process ... when it comes to proper etiquette" in the air, he said.

It has also won praise from Anna Post — the great-great-granddaughter of etiquette icon Emily Post — who said the videos could be an effective way to teach passengers how to better fly the friendly skies.

"The more aware people are about how their actions affect others, the better the chances are that they'll make more of an effort to be considerate," said Post, who leads business etiquette seminars at the Emily Post Institute in Burlington, Vt.

"The times when I see rudeness happening [are] when I don't see people being self-aware. It's great to see an airline acknowledge they understand the crazy situations passengers go through." DANIEL YEE (AP)

Multimedia Memorials

Technology

High-tech tombstone panel honors the dead but lacks popularity

No one would set a scrapbook filled with pictures and memories on the tombstone of a loved one. But what about a high-tech, weatherproof version, with digital images powered by a solar cell?

That innovation is available now — but finding customers so far has proven slowgoing.

"I haven't sold any," said Doug Ellis of Riverview Monuments in Wausau, Wis., who has been offering the so-called "serenity panel" system for about \$2,000 since February.

Many customers tell him, "That is not for me," he said.

The panel mounts to the front of the gravestone and pays tribute to the deceased in color pictures, words, music and even videos. It's all from a small memory chip inside a



The "serenity panel" pays tribute to the dead through audio-visual presentations.

device that opens like the front cover of a book. Vidstone LLC, a company with offices in Florida and Colorado, developed the serenity panel about two years ago.

Cheri Lucking, Vidstone's

national sales director in Aurora, Colo., said the company has about 100 dealers across the country, including two in Minnesota, four in Illinois and seven in Michigan, and one in the United

“I thought it was a neat thing ... a little above and beyond just the standard engraving and pictures.”

DOUG ELLIS, RIVERVIEW MONUMENTS

Kingdom. Ellis is the only one in Wisconsin.

"We don't release our sales figures," she said. "It is not a huge number at the moment."

Maria Schlitzberger, office manager of Schlitzberger and Daughters Monument Co. in Houston, said her company has sold one serenity panel in a year.

"That is a big step, putting electronics on your headstone," she said. "People are used to sandblasted, granite and marble, and things like that."

Lucking likened the concept of putting a digital video scrapbook on a tombstone to when cellphones

first came out and people said they would never own one.

"We all have one now," she said.

Ways of honoring the dead are changing because of technology, Lucking said.

More funeral homes use state-of-the-art visuals and put LCD screens in their chapels to do multimedia presentations, she said. "Five or six years ago, they weren't even doing video tributes."

Four hours of sun provides enough juice to play the video with up to a 10-minute tribute on a 7-inch LCD screen about six times. There are headphone jacks to listen to the audio.

"I thought it was a neat thing to bring into the industry. Something unique, something a little above and beyond just the standard engraving and pictures that end up on a monument," Ellis said.

Chuck Summers, retail sales manager for Moore Monument and Granite Co. in Sterling, Ill., has had the device for about three months and is awaiting his first sale, too. He has two good prospects but no signed deal.

"We range from \$5,000 to \$8,000 on a typical stone. When you tack on another \$2,000 for the Vidstone, it gets pricey for the people in the area," he said.

ROBERT IMRIE (AP)

5 Day Forecast for the Washington Area

| Today | Tonight | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| | | | | | |
| A little rain, areas of morning fog | Cloudy, a little rain | Cloudy, colder, showers | Partly sunny, breezy | Colder, rain and snow possible | Rain, snow |

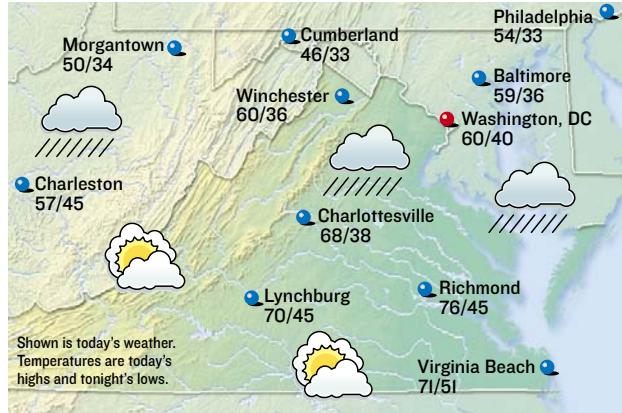
60°

40°

46° / 38°

| Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 52° / 34° | 40° / 28° | 42° / 26° |

Regional Weather



Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2007

Almanac

Washington, D.C., through 4 p.m. Tues.

Temperature

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| High | 48° |
| Low | 44° |
| Normal high | 48° |
| Normal low | 33° |
| Average humidity | 84% |

Precipitation

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| 24 hours ending 4 p.m. | Trace |
| Month to date | 0.96" |
| Normal month to date | 1.08" |
| Year to date | 30.61" |
| Last year to date | 46.27" |
| Normal year to date | 37.38" |

For up-to-the-minute weather, see: washingtonpost.com/weather

Regional Forecast

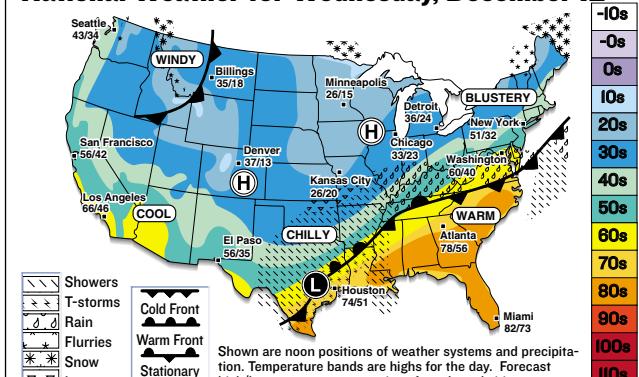
D.C. Metro: Today, mostly cloudy, mild, a little rain, areas of morning fog. High 60. Tonight, cloudy, a bit of rain. Low 40.

Sun and Moon

| | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Sunrise today | 7:17 a.m. |
| Sunset tonight | 4:46 p.m. |
| Moonrise today | 9:51 a.m. |
| Moonset today | 7:22 p.m. |

| First | Full | Last | New |
|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| Dec 17 | Dec 23 | Dec 31 | Jan 8 |

National Weather for Wednesday, December 12



National Cities

| City | Today Hi/Lo/W | Thur. Hi/Lo/W | City | Today Hi/Lo/W | Thur. Hi/Lo/W |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Atlanta | 78/56/c | 73/46/sh | Amsterdam | 45/37/pc | 41/32/pc |
| Boston | 46/25/r | 32/23/sn | Athens | 57/52/sh | 55/48/r |
| Chicago | 33/23/pc | 32/22/sn | Berlin | 43/30/sh | 39/30/pc |
| Dallas | 46/34/r | 54/40/pc | Buenos Aires | 86/66/s | 88/68/s |
| Denver | 37/13/pc | 34/10/pc | Calgary | 29/14/pc | 22/12/pc |
| Honolulu | 82/72/pc | 82/64/pc | Dublin | 54/43/sh | 52/41/pc |
| Los Angeles | 66/46/s | 66/45/pc | Geneva | 4/27/c | 39/24/pc |
| Miami | 82/73/s | 82/71/pc | Moscow | 30/25/sf | 27/23/sn |
| New York City | 51/32/r | 37/32/sn | Rome | 53/37/pc | 52/36/pc |
| Orlando | 80/62/s | 83/61/pc | Sydney | 72/63/pc | 72/65/s |
| Seattle | 43/34/c | 43/36/r | Tokyo | 54/44/pc | 55/43/r |

s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.

Styles

LOOK
out



HAIR IT IS! Jennifer Egan, below, travels with this arsenal of clips, straightening irons, brushes and other products. Yikes.

Honeyman, a fashion publicist in Hollywood.

Then there are those who focus on prolonging the luster of their blowout. Jennifer Egan's hair is her signature characteristic. To ensure her mane is stick-straight, Egan, who works for the nonprofit arts organization Gen Art, turns to an arsenal she calls her "kit." Housed in a rolling suitcase, the kit comes with her when she knows she is going out directly after work.

Inside are a blow-dryer, a straightening iron, clips to section off hair, dry shampoo, pomade, two

“I have been broke, but when that blow-dryer breaks, I will go and get another one for \$120.”

SHANA HONEYMAN, PUBLICIST

brushes (a round and a flat), gloss and finishing spray. And that natural shine? It's from years of taking prenatal vitamins — not because she was looking toward motherhood, but to grow out a "bad 'Friends' haircut" she got in high school. These days, she can prolong her blowout for two to three days by using Batiste dry shampoo spray to absorb oil and dirt. The product is not FDA-approved, so Egan has it shipped over from Britain.

Egan's hair is as smooth as glass, a curtain with no layers. But an elaborate, layered cut is more common among the hair-slave crowd, and many are as obsessed with their cuts as with their styling regimens.

After a haircut from a substitute stylist, Boock measured her layers and realized he had deviated. "He cut 3 inches off and didn't layer the back," she says. "I was hysterically crying and drank seven glasses of wine and threw up in Mel's Diner after that cut. I had a tail!"

For some people, this is serious business. And as long as shiny, straight, strong hair is the trend, some women will go to, well, any length to attain it.

"Hair seems to be possessed," Wells says. "Even though it's dead, it has a life all of its own."

MELISSA MAGSAYSAY (LOS ANGELES TIMES)

Beauty

Oh, Face Highlighter!

We don't really know what you do,

You white-ish powders, you.

We put you on each cheekbone,

Whose angles you allegedly hone.

You leave a subtle glow,

Over which the light will flow,

But sometimes you look greasy,

Which makes oily skin uneasy.

We dotted you on our nose,

And that was kind of gross;

We rubbed you on our eyes,

Which made



our opinion rise.

But on our lips was weird —

You simply disappeared.

BENEFIT'S MISS POPULARITY, \$24,

SEPHORA. HOLLY J. MORRIS (EXPRESS)

Beauty



Ode to Tasty Lip Balm

You smell so sweet,

Yet taste like a candle;

When they discover wax causes cancer,

It'll be such a scandal!

For the holidays,

Here's one of cherry —

What the heck does cherry have to do with Christmas?

That makes us not merry.

Here, too, sugar cookie,

And both have sunscreen,

Because dermatologists say you need it even in winter,

So your health can be clean.

Until you get cancer from wax.

SOFTLIPS LIMITED-EDITION LIP BALM,

\$4 FOR TWO, DRUGSTORES. H.J.M.

Locks of Labor

Oh, the lengths women will go for stick-straight hair!

So much for the liberated woman. After years of relatively carefree, wash-and-wear hair, the pendulum has swung back to the kind of perfect, polished, "done" hair that took our grandmothers to the beauty parlor every week. Remember laughing at hairnets worn to bed? They're nothing compared with what some women are willing to endure today.

In the pursuit of perfectly pin-straight, rootless tresses, women will hide, cancel plans or avoid breaking a sweat — all to keep their hair intact. Instead of paying bills, they are handing hundreds of dollars to their stylists for blowouts.

They are slaves to their hair.

"I have avoided exercise in order not to ruin a blowout," says Melis-

sa Boock, a toy designer who lives in West Hollywood. "And when it's really hot during the summer, I won't go out during the day, so I won't sweat."

Celebrity hairstylist Kimberly Kimble, who does cuts and styles for Beyoncé and Vanessa Williams, attributes the fever to a trend shift — away from the natural-looking, beachy, bed-head tresses we saw on Jennifer Aniston and Gisele Bundchen five years ago and toward straight, shiny, "done" locks.

"It's not about bed head," Kimble says. "It's all about polish now." Women want strong, straight hair because it makes them feel confident, says Linda Wells, editor in chief of Allure magazine. "Men have power suits; women have power hair."

And they're shelling out for it.

"I have been broke, but when that blow-dryer breaks, I will go and get another one for \$120," says Shana



Jennifer Egan turned to prenatal vitamins to help grow out a bad haircut.

Lookout Online

 readexpress.com

site specifics

MUSIC

Acting Out, Singing In

When Mikal Evans moved to D.C., she did not intend to sweep into the music scene with her romantic yet slanted electric folk record. What she really wanted to do was act. Express contributor Aaron Leitko spoke with Evans before her Wednesday concert at the Black Cat. | COMING UP



BOOKS

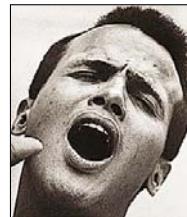
The Whole Non-Hog

In their 2005 book "Skinny Bitch," Rory Freedman and Kim Barnouin used tough-girl 'tude to convince women to get thin by going vegan. Express' Jennifer Barger talked to the duo about their new book, "Skinny Bitch in the Kitch," a collection of vegan recipes. | ONLINE NOW

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

Activist Art

Although the National Museum of African American History does not yet exist in the flesh, the National Portrait Gallery is showcasing the museum's first photo collection. Express' Darona Williams reviews the culturally courageous exhibit. | COMING UP



comment board

“[Vick] should have gotten more time. He financed this operation, he ran it from a property he owned, and he also took part in some of the worst aspects of the operation.”

COMMENTER DANIELLE, WHO ADDED, “WORSE, HE LIED TO INVESTIGATORS ABOUT HIS INVOLVEMENT.”



“It doesn’t really matter. The press he has received has ended his career. Three years, or one year: What does it matter? [Vick] has been all but destroyed by this.”

COMMENTER AUA, RESPONDING TO TUESDAY’S POLL CENTER QUESTION, “DO YOU THINK MICHAEL VICK DESERVED MORE JAIL TIME THAN HIS CO-CONSPIRATORS?”

poll center

YESTERDAY’S RESULTS AS OF 5 P.M.

DO YOU THINK MICHAEL VICK DESERVED MORE JAIL TIME THAN HIS CO-CONSPIRATORS?

66% YES **34%** NO

SEE HOW YOUR METRO STATION VOTED AT READEXPRESS.COM/POLLCENTER.PHP

Blog LOG

“The genius that is capitalism and religion have paired up to offer the Talking Jesus Doll at Wal-Mart and Target.”

SOLARKISMET.WORDPRESS.COM WONDERS WHETHER THE TALKING JESUS DOLL IS MADE IN CHINA FROM BAD MATERIALS: “CAN SOMEONE TEST JESUS TO SEE IF HE’S MADE OF LEAD?”



“HERDS OF ANTELOPE anxiously running along the road were replaced by herds of anxious commuters driving erratically in the winter slush. Blue skies and dark, star-filled nights that made you ache to write poetry were replaced with the claustrophobic mix of office buildings and crowded freeways.”

FROMACROSSTHERIVER.BLOGSPOT.COM HAS RETURNED FROM VACATION.

“I FEEL BAD for [Gary Coleman], then I don’t because all of us, stars or not, should be saving and investing our money in things so that no matter [if] we fall off or not, we still have some money to keep making money.”

A BOSSIP.COM COMMENTER ON THE FORMER CHILD STAR’S SELLING HIS CAR ON EBAY.

“IT’S A SPONGE! Let’s try to keep the ridiculous cost of medical care from ballooning further. Order neon yellow sponges so after they absorb blood, they don’t look like tissue.”

A CONSUMERIST.COM COMMENTER THINKS IT’S SILLY FOR SURGEONS TO HAVE BAR-CODE-SCANNABLE SPONGES TO ENSURE THEY AREN’T LEFT INSIDE PATIENTS.

Discussions

TV in the Future

PHILLIP SWANN, president and CEO of TV Predictions.com, was online Tuesday to discuss the latest HDTV technologies and the transition to digital television.

Is there a plan to reduce the environmental impact of the simultaneous abandonment of tens of millions of suddenly obsolete TVs? Sony has actually opened up about 75 TV recycling centers across the country — and other TV makers will likely follow suit soon. But there is still a big issue here —

what to do with all those TVs.

Will Comcast ever catch up with satellite TV in the number of HD channels?

Yes, cable (and Comcast) will catch up — but it will take most of 2008 to get there. The cable ops, IMHO, spent too much time on the Triple Play and not enough on improving high-def service and lineups. They now realize their mistake.

Why do Time Warner channels take standard definition broadcasts and stretch them to fill the high definition versions of their channels? It looks terrible.

It’s not just Time Warner. The TV providers are just transmitting

what’s sent to them. TBS, TNT and some other HD channels sometimes broadcast in real high-def but sometimes stretch standard-def shows so they will fill the screen.

Will the big-box stores have post-Christmas/New Year’s sales that offer discounts anywhere close to Black Friday’s?

There will be some discounts, but not like last year. TV retailers are determined this year to keep the average TV price as high as possible.

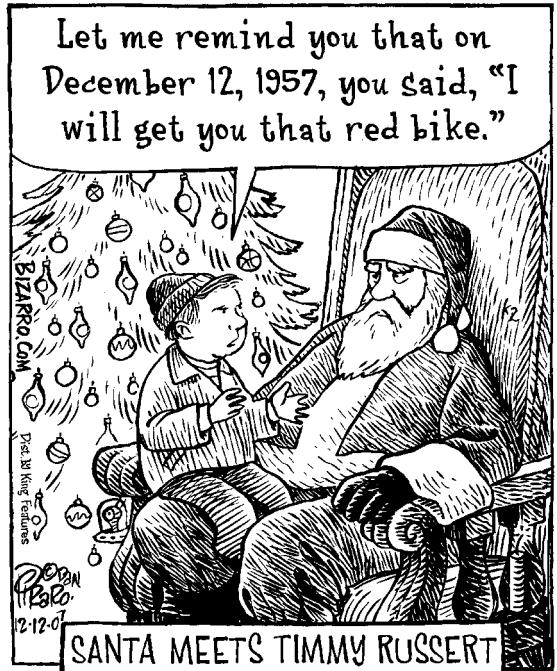
TODAY ON DISCUSSIONS: Washington Post food critic Tom Sietsema answers your questions about Washington dining at 11 a.m. | washingtonpost.com/discussions.

DON'T

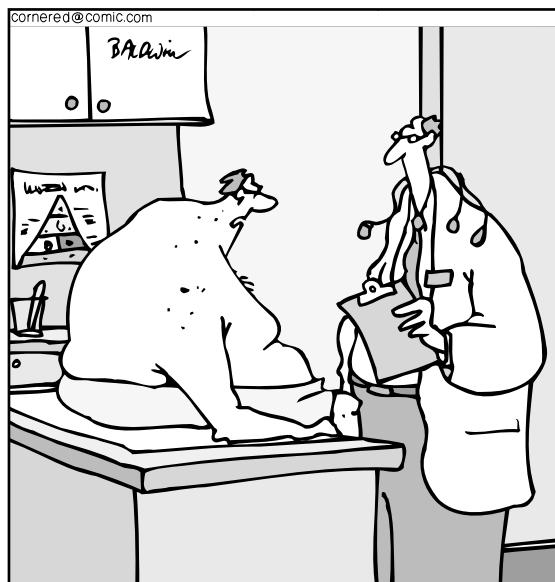
BE ALARMED BY MILITARY AIRCRAFT OVERHEAD. The Civil Air Patrol, Coast Guard and Air Force will be conducting training exercises in the D.C. area Wednesday for the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), according to WTOP.

LOOK out

Bizarro | Dan Piraro

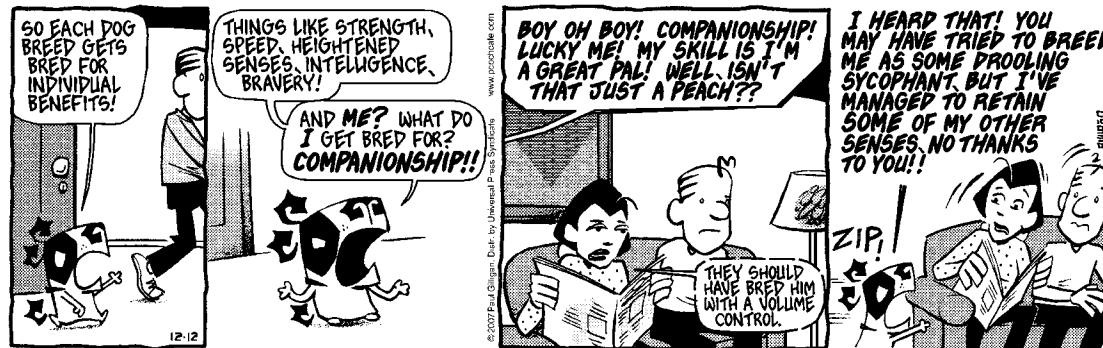


Cornered | Mike Baldwin



"I do exercise and eat a healthy diet – just not compulsively."

Pooch Cafe | Paul Gilligan



Pearls Before Swine | Stephan Pastis



The Duplex | Glenn McCoy



Horoscope

By Stella Wilder

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Your attitude toward others may be in need of some adjustment — or so say family members. A disagreement must be resolved.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Your day is likely to be filled with engaging and invigorating conversation of all kinds. What you give you'll get back in abundance.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) Don't make the mistake of moving on to something else before you are truly finished with the first thing you have undertaken.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) Take care that you do not become so single-minded in your endeavors that you are seen as being stubborn or inflexible. Remain cooperative.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) You may be confusing what you want to do with what you need to do. Prioritize, and you'll be better prepared to proceed.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) You may be

rather moody, but no one is likely to be affected for long. Soon, you'll realize there's no point in sulking.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) Your personal power is on the rise, but be sure to control it even as it increases hour by hour. Don't get carried away.

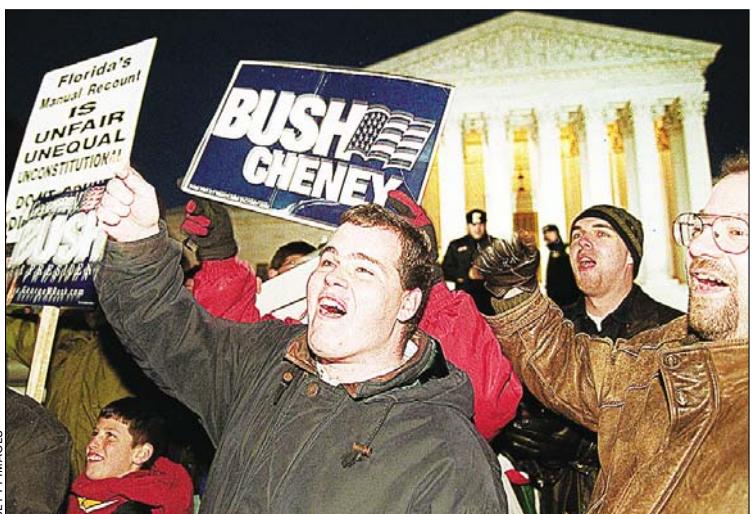
CANCER (June 21-July 22) Concentrate on following instructions to the letter. You don't want to be the one who, out of carelessness, wrecks havoc at the workplace.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) Despite the overwhelming positive nature of the week as a whole, you may have something unpleasant to do before this day is out.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Self-confidence is not a problem for you. Indeed, the converse may be true: You may have to hold yourself back on occasion.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) You may have to follow someone else's seemingly arbitrary rules, but you'll learn to adjust and roll with the punches.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) You'll derive a great deal of inspiration from the most mundane of circumstances. You may be surprised to find out where your power lies.



Republicans cheer after the Supreme Court ruled for George W. Bush in 2000.

Today in History

1917 Father Edward Flanagan founds Boys Town outside Omaha, Neb.

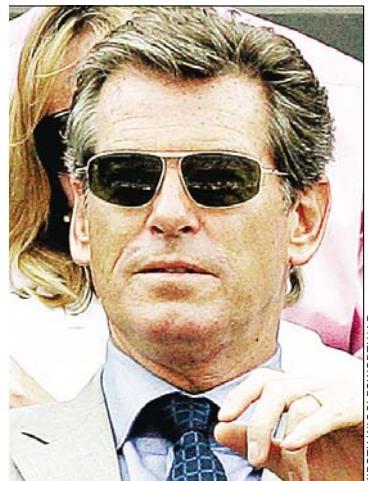
1925 The first motel, the Motel Inn, opens in San Luis Obispo, Calif.

2000 A divided Supreme Court reverses a state court decision for recounts in Florida's contested election, transforming George W. Bush into the president-elect.

2006 Actor Peter Boyle dies in New York at age 71.

Look out

People



PR

Attack a Photographer, Be on Camera, in Press

PIERCE BROSNAN is being sued for assault, battery and negligence by a photographer who claims the actor shoved him during a scuffle in a Malibu, Calif., parking lot. Robert Rosen said he was taking photos of Brosnan on Oct. 26 when "suddenly and without warning," the actor, 54, struck him in the chest, causing "severe physical and emotional pain and injuries, including bruised ribs." The lawsuit, filed Monday, claims Rosen wasn't chasing the ex-James Bond and former "Remington Steele" star and didn't invade his privacy. (AP)

Just as all newborns look like Winston Churchill, so do all aging Hollywood playboys look like George Hamilton.

AILING

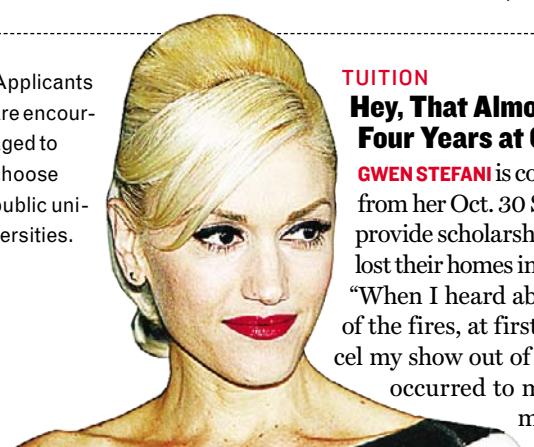
Alex Trebek Suffers Minor Heart Attack

Longtime "Jeopardy!" host **ALEX TREBEK** was hospitalized Tuesday after a minor heart attack, a spokesman for the game show said. Trebek, 67, was admitted to Los Angeles' Cedars-Sinai Medical Center late

Monday night and was expected to remain there about two days for tests and observation, said show spokesman Jeff Ritter. "Thankfully, it was a minor heart attack," Ritter said. (AP)



Applicants are encouraged to choose public universities.



TUITION

Hey, That Almost Covers Four Years at GWU!

GWEN STEFANI is contributing \$166,000 from her Oct. 30 San Diego concert to provide scholarships for students who lost their homes in the recent wildfires. "When I heard about the devastation of the fires, at first I felt I should cancel my show out of respect. But then it occurred to me there might be a more useful solution," she said. (AP)



DENIS POROY/AP



Her eyes are black holes of bad music.

IRREDEEMABLE

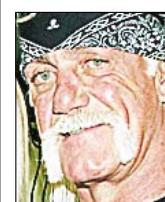
iTunes Users' Poor Taste Passes Over Event Horizon

Maroon 5 and **FERGIE** hold the top spots on iTunes' year-end sales roundup. Maroon 5's "It Won't Be Soon Before Long" was the No. 1 seller, followed by Amy Winehouse's "Back to Black" and Kanye West's "Graduation." Fergie came in first in singles sales for "Big Girls Don't Cry." (AP)

POSITIVE!

'At Least I'm Not Being Executed for Treason'

It's been a rough year for **HULK HOGAN**. His wife, Linda, filed for divorce after 24 years of marriage,



and the couple's 17-year-old son, Nick Bollea, is facing charges of reckless driving. "I'm leaning into the wind," Hogan, whose real name is Terry Bollea, told "Access Hollywood." "I'm trying to stay very, very positive. ... I love my family and I love my wife to death, and I just don't know what tomorrow's going to bring." (AP)

EARLY RETIREMENT

Rest on 'Piece

PBS' "Masterpiece Theatre" will soon be split into three mini-seasons, each with its own theme and host — one of whom is **GILLIAN ANDERSON**, already familiar to "Masterpiece" fans as Lady Dedlock in "Bleak House." From Jan. 13 through May, she will present 10 programs, including six Jane Austen adaptations. Hosts for the other two cycles have not yet been announced. (AP)

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LOOK out

CROSSWORD | PEAS, PLEASE

ACROSS

- 1 Lines of music?
- 6 Stray home
- 10 Trey's trey
- 14 One who hears "You've got mail!"
- 15 Some timeline times
- 16 Act as a getaway driver, e.g.
- 17 Tactic to make something less desirable, in financial slang
- 19 Hidden mike
- 20 High-tech entertainment option
- 21 Admits
- 23 Acceptive response
- 24 Old Apple computer
- 25 Kind of rally or talk
- 26 "___ Joey"
- 27 Subject of middle school fantasies
- 32 Within reason
- 35 Idyllic place
- 37 John on a farm
- 38 It may say "Wish you were here!"
- 41 Modify to fit
- 42 Scots tongue
- 43 "Born Free" co-star
- 44 Criticize harshly
- 46 Reply to a ques.
- 48 Crowd's shout
- 49 East ___ Alto, California
- 51 Ala. neighbor
- 54 Alternative to laser

57 Etna action

59 Hawaii's state bird

60 Income without expenses

62 High-level manager, briefly

63 Some ship positions

64 Admits customers

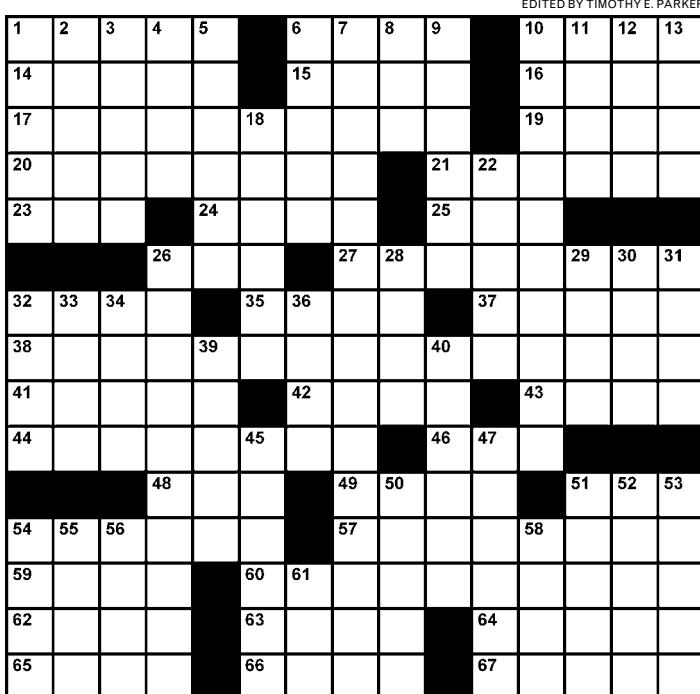
65 Leave be

66 Fluctuate wildly

67 Overbearing

DOWN

- 1 Too sentimental
- 2 "A Confederacy of Dunces" author John Kennedy
- 3 Something to go by
- 4 Spill the info (with "up")
- 5 Of the City of Angels
- 6 Clan divisions
- 7 "No Hunting" sign site
- 8 Baseball's Ripken
- 9 Inclined
- 10 Shortest chessmen
- 11 Stork's cousin
- 12 Machu Picchu's land
- 13 One of 12 in a program
- 18 Carpenter's tool
- 22 "Cheers" actor George
- 26 Personal undertaking
- 28 Nephew of Cain
- 29 Ante follower



30 Guitarist Benjamin and hockey legend Bobby

31 One of Jupiter's moons

32 Shoe cover

33 Deputy

34 Bowl org. (Zingarelli opera)

36 Insect repellent ingredient

39 Of value

40 Make airtight

45 Spendable salary

47 "Sure thing!"

50 Playground retort

51 Small instruments

52 Meat cuts

53 Jittery

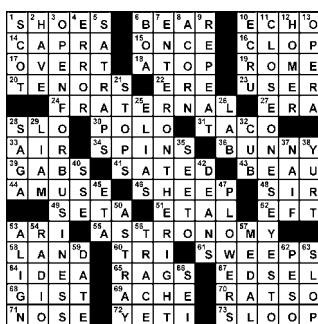
54 "___ de Castro"

55 Cry from a counter

56 Oft-scraped site

58 ___ Gigio (famous mouse)

Yesterday's Solution



SUDOKU | MEDIUM

Fill in the boxes so each row, column and 3-by-3 square includes the digits 1 through 9. See www.sudoku.com for solution, tips and computer program.

Need more Sudoku?
Find another Sudoku puzzle in the Comics section of the Post every Sunday and in the Style section Monday through Saturday.

Yesterday's Solution



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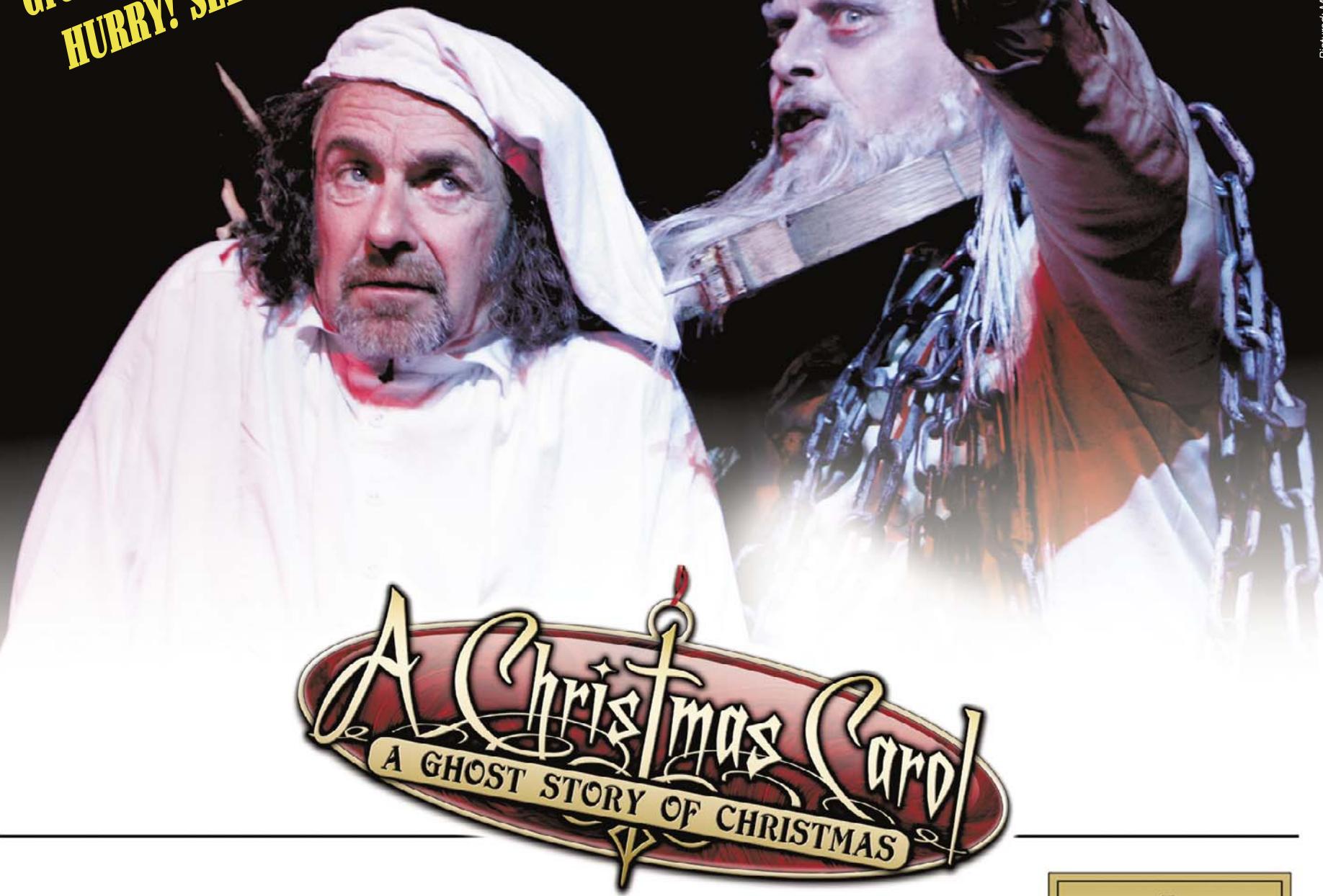
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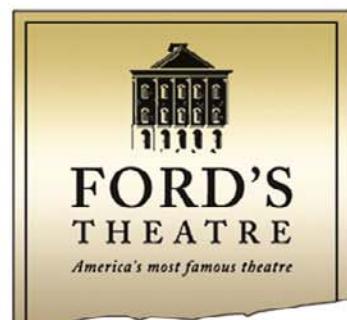
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CIAO AND TELL: During twice-per-month events at Vapiano restaurant in Georgetown, the Washington Italian Language Meetup Group practices the vocabulary of la dolce vita over coffee, beer, wine and pizza.

The Fluent Season

MEETUPS HELP YOU BRUSH UP ON FOREIGN LANGUAGES

When Beth Rabbin returned to Maryland in early 2006 after two years of living and working in Florence, she worried that she would lose her newfound fluency in Italian. "I was looking up classes [online]," says Rabbin, 26, a fitness instructor and an office

CONTINUED ON E2



The Space Man

A pro organizer finds happiness by keeping clients' stuff in order | **E4**



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Getting Ahead

Language Meetups

CONTINUED FROM EI

administrator, "but it's so expensive. I started thinking, 'It's probably not worth it. I'm kind of past the grammar stuff ... and it's not worth all the money, just to do worksheets."

But by searching for "Italian language groups" on the Internet, the Bethesda resident found an informal, no-cost alternative: the Montgomery County Italian Language Meetup Group, hosted by Meetup.com. She registered with the Web site (for free) and RSVPed for a bi-monthly meeting. Soon, Rabbin found herself in a Starbucks, practicing her "ciao" and "come vas" (How are you?) with new "amici" (friends) over "caffè" (coffee) and "dolci" (desserts).

Initial awkwardness aside, Rabbin was happy to socialize in Italian and began organizing bi-monthly Friendship Heights-based meetings for the group's approximately 700-member Washington chapter.

Don't worry. Not everyone attends at once — that might be like a scary scene from a Fellini film.

"We usually get somewhere between 10 and 15 [participants each meeting]," Rabbin says, "and that's a really good number, I think. It's big enough that you can split into smaller groups, but it's small enough that you get to meet everybody."



goods abroad, it's going to be important that we're able to speak the languages of the countries that we sell our products to."

Abbott, who is also a former language educator and administrator of 33 years, says that meetups can boost language skills. "There's no better way to learn a language than to get together with other people to speak it," she says.

Plenty of meetup members feel the same way.

"There are some people who come to the [Italian] meetup because they travel to Italy with their jobs," Rabbin says. "They say, 'I don't speak a word of Italian, but I've got to go to Rome for my job, and I want to learn.'"

Rabbin says she thinks employers are "impressed" by her Italian fluency. "I think people see that as a plus," she says.

People of all ages and interests can join any meetup group, and membership is free or costs a minimal amount (Meetup.com charges approximately \$10 to \$20 per month for each group's online space, and some organizers split the fee among members). Because meetings are often held in public spaces, like restaurants, cafes and bars, organizers encourage group members to buy a drink or snack and stay awhile. Some meetings last for hours.

The Arabic Language and Culture group's weekly meeting,

The Washington Italian Language Meetup Group gathers twice per month at Vapiano to practice their language skills and eat.

"Over time, I've probably lost some of my skills, just from not speaking Italian [constantly], but this has definitely helped me learn, too," Rabbin says. The Italian group is one of more than 60 Meetup.com-hosted foreign language groups that convene regularly in and around Washington. Local linguists practice a variety of languages — everything

from Korean to Kurdish — and the largest groups (French and Spanish) each boast more than 1,400 members.

Experts say language skills, whether gained through meetups or formal classes, can be a particularly valuable leg up in the competitive working world. So, learning and practicing a new vernacular — or even brushing up on that rusty high

school French — is a smart idea.

"Since the world has changed so much and we're living in this global society," foreign language skills are increasingly important for American professionals, says Marty Abbott, director of education at the Alexandria-based nonprofit American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. "If we expect to be able to sell our

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Getting Ahead

for example, typically runs about three hours — from 3 until 6 p.m. every Sunday at Adams Morgan's Old City of Jerusalem Cafe. Fouad Francis, 34, who organizes the group of more than 500, says the sessions never feel like a chore.

"It's a friendly, social gathering," Francis says. "We discuss events. We discuss what's going on in the world, what they are learning [in Arabic]."

Francis, a Silver Spring resident who lived in Kuwait for 18 years, says he enjoys sharing his native tongue with others.

"Believe it or not, I speak a lot more English than I speak Arabic," Francis says. "Most of my friends are not Arabic. So, I like to maintain my language and speak my language. It keeps [Arabic] fresh in my memory ... so I don't forget it."

Humayun K. Marufkhail, 32, who organizes the 18-member Pashto Language & Culture Meetup Group, started the group in August to gather support for the nonprofit Global Pashtun Institute for Peace & Democracy (which he founded two years ago to raise American awareness of the Pashto culture that originated in Afghanistan and Pakistan).

Native Pashto speakers, non-Pashtun Americans learning the language, and a diplomat who

“The focus on language that people find is the biggest benefit.”

KEITH GILBERT, MEETUP ORGANIZER

uses Pashto on trips abroad are among the individuals who have found the group online and come to monthly meetings at Fairfax's Panera Bread.

Though not everyone in the group knew of Marufkhail's Institute and its broader goals, Marufkhail says most are supportive.

"They've given me ideas for the Web site and [advice about] where to go for grants," Marufkhail says.

Networking takes place on a more personal level among participants in the nearly 60-member Washington Polish Language Meetup group. Malgosia Mikolajczyk, 32, says Polish Americans at the monthly meetups often bond

over shared childhood experiences.

"I think what people want [is the opportunity to talk about] 'Where have you gone in Poland?' 'What did you experience growing up?'" the Rockville resident said at the group's October Salsa Night meeting at Clarendon Grill. "Some people, our parents would make us go to Polish school on Saturdays, so we'll talk about that. ... I don't really hang out with Polish people, so it's nice to do this once in a while, just to speak Polish."

Non-native speakers say the meetups are an unparalleled chance to chat in foreign languages. Keith Gilbert, 40, the primary organizer of the Italian meetups since 2003, believes that casual conversation at meetups — in addition to formal lessons — has helped him become proficient in Italian.

"I've definitely improved my language skills since I've joined," Gilbert says. "The focus on language that people find — to actually be able to go and try out language skills and talk about whatever is on their mind — is the biggest benefit. Otherwise, there just aren't many opportunities out there to speak Italian." KATIE ABERBACH (EXPRESS)

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GOOD TO NEAT YOU: After fixing up a friend's place, Scott Roewer decided to pursue a career organizing other people's stuff.

Ardor for Order

A former music teacher scales a new career ladder as a pro organizer

It takes discipline and some degree of structure to teach harried middle-schoolers to harmonize. Maybe that's why Scott Roewer is good at harmonizing the lives and spaces of harried Washingtonians.

For seven years before making himself over as a professional organizer, Roewer, 34, — with a master's in education from the University of Missouri-Kansas City — taught vocal music to Midwestern students. He moved to the District in 2003 to do meeting planning for contractors to two federal agencies.

When a business-consultant friend, Steve McMahon, went away for the holidays, Roewer rounded up pals and surprised him with a home and office fix-up — every-

thing from painting, repairing a hole in the ceiling, and installing new business furniture to filing 10 years' worth of paper. McMahon, delighted, told Roewer that others would pay him to do the same for them.

"He became my biggest booster and taught me how to run a small business," Roewer says. That was important, because Roewer calls himself "a teacher and a business owner who happens to be an organizer. I joke that I organize 30 percent of the time and run a business the other 70 percent."

He did organizing on the side for another year and a half, taking workshops from the 4,000-member National Association of Professional Organizers (Napo.net), making contacts, and loading up on advice and expertise. In late 2005, he left contracting and launched D.C.-based

Solutions by Scott full time.

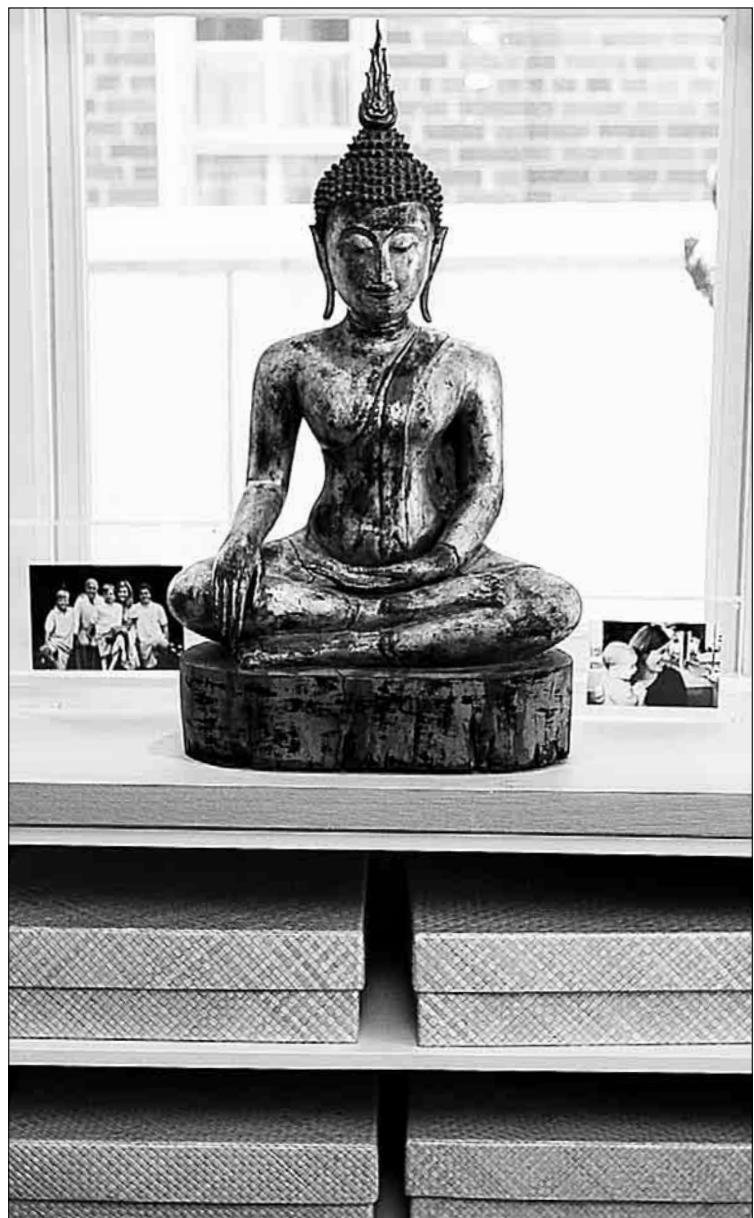
"I directly link my success in business to my involvement with the professional association," Roewer says. Classes and conferences have given him knowledge, networking has scored him clients, and volunteering — among other things, he's in his second year as president of the local NAPO chapter — has brought confidence and visibility.

Then there's on-the-job experience. His least pleasant gig was cleaning up a client's garage during a Washington heat wave. After four hours on a ladder without enough water and food, he got light-headed, and the client asked, "You're not going to pass out on me, are you?"

Far more fun is showing clients how to tidy a closet, kitchen, or office and knowing that they will use that new system for years to come. For customers who think in color,

**Change
Artists**

Getting Ahead



At organizer Scott Roewer's condo, boxes and a Buddha are neatly arranged.



he might suggest filing financial papers in green folders and high-importance papers in red ones. For those overly attached to possessions — “But my mother gave me that!” — he helps them separate the emotional from the practical.

“As we say goodbye, they might shed a tear of joy or happiness,” he says. “I know at that point my work is validated. The tear can be because it’s the first time they’ll be able to sit on the sofa in a long while, they are finally unpacking the boxes from their last move, or they will no longer be embarrassed to have company.”

“I never saw tears after a successful convention from the nice people at DoD or DoT,” he says.

Anyone can fire up a Web page and call himself or herself an organizer; community colleges offer basic courses, mainly on the business aspects. But few make a

profitable career of it. Roewer’s continual self-education (he also joined the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization and earned its Certificate of Study in Chronic Disorganization) and aid to others have helped his business grow. Now a new credential is taking him further.

Recently, 211 people passed the first national exam to become certified professional organizers. All have also logged considerable time in client service and study, and have pledged themselves to higher industry standards and ethics. Roewer is proud to be among those elite few.

To potential clients, certification shows that the person “has been a hands-on organizer, has taken the time to get educated on basic principles, and is committed to working on his or her business,” says NAPO President Standolyn Robertson.

NAPO members generally charge \$50 to \$125 per hour (higher fees are usually for businesses). Roewer saw some certified colleagues raise their rates immediately; he probably will soon. “People ask for your credentials, especially in Washington,” he says. With certification, “I’ve had people notice it. They’re impressed, especially hoarders” — potential clients particularly in need of organization help.

A combination of talent and connections will soon get Roewer national visibility: By referral, he was asked to audition for the series “Time Makeover” on cable’s Fine Living network. The series began last month, with Roewer’s episodes airing in late winter. He’s already appeared on Retirement Living TV’s “Daily Cafe” and “The Prudent Advisor” programs to advise on downsizing and is a consultant to Closets magazine.

What’s next for Roewer? He’s thinking about taking on one or more carefully screened employees. After all, business is booming: NAPO membership has doubled in the last four years, and new exposure and credentials will only keep Solutions by Scott in demand.

Though one-on-one work with clients certainly differs from leading a school chorus or directing a musical, Roewer sees similarities — bringing disparate skills into play, knowing how to put all the pieces in order, and seeing smiles when it all comes together in harmony. **ELLEN RYAN**

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Middle Passage

A new book tells workers how to escape from a mid-career rut

Looking for a new job isn't an issue just for recent college graduates. People who have spent 10 or 15 years in the same careers can often face similar issues and stresses — think burnout, stress or plain-old tedium. Other workers, confronted with early retirement or layoffs, are forced to figure out new job paths when their college- or graduate-school days are dim memories.

In "Mid-Career Doldrums: What to Do Next When You're Bored, Burned Out, Retired or Fired" (Wiley, \$19), Charles A. Buck and Marcia L. Worthing help the poor, befuddled masses figure out what's next. We recently caught up with Worthing, who is currently going through a career change of her own (from business to social work), to get her tips on navigating a career switch.

What inspired you to write this book?

I wrote it with Charles Buck, and we both had the same interesting background. We'd been inside corporations as heads of human resources. Then we were in the trenches doing outplacement, just working one-on-one with people. We had seen so many people who

ESCAPE the Mid-Career Doldrums



What to Do Next
When You're
Bored,
Burned Out,
Retired,
or Fired

had gone through difficult times, retired prematurely or lost their jobs. We'd been there with them when they faced the shock or the hurt, and watched them as they got it back together. We worked with them as they reinvented themselves. It was something we thought was interesting.

What exactly are mid-career doldrums?

I think it's what happens to people who just sit in their offices and aren't excited about their jobs anymore. They're thinking, "I should have quit three years ago. I'm just not motivated anymore." And we would see it mostly with mid-career people. Younger people would tend to just change their jobs if it wasn't going well, but these people were more stuck.

Why do people find themselves trapped?

One of things we talk about, and one my favorite parts of the book, was the myths they tend to buy into. Like, the "It's my fault. I did something wrong" myth. That can have someone stuck. They can blame themselves, and they think they are responsible when they were at the wrong place at the wrong time. Or that at age 65, it's time to retire. If you think you're supposed to retire at 65, you're going to be stuck. People worry, "What's my family going to think? What are my friends going to think?" Once people kind of face up to their myths, they can move forward.

How can you recognize if you're in the doldrums?

I think if you find yourself not excited to get up in the morning or dreading going to work, if you feel a little crushed. You're just going through the motions, but not really being excited. Life is so short, and a lot of your time is spent at work. You should try to find ways to make it as good as it can possibly be.

Is it hard to change careers later in life?

It is hard. I'm going through it myself right now. You sort of get programmed, and you get rewarded for certain behaviors over the years. Then, all of a sudden, [if you make a career change], the rewards may change. If you're in a not-for-profit

Getting Ahead

“It’s like playing a game, and all of a sudden, the rules change.”

MARCI A. WORTHING, AUTHOR

it, you’re not going to get the same rewards financially or emotionally that you got in business. You have to get used to that. It’s like playing a game, and all of a sudden, the rules change.

How do you start over as a newbie at 40 or 50 or even older?

Stay open and keep your sense of humor. Think of it as an opportunity rather than as something that is stressful and brings you down.

You have to have an open, upbeat attitude. You’ve done so many other things in your career — you can do this.

What is your favorite piece of advice from the book?

The concept of letting go of things that don’t matter that are bringing you down, that are keeping you from being everything that you want. It’s important to embrace the new. I can’t think of a one-liner that can sum it up, but I think that’s probably the thing that I would see most often with people. They would be worrying about the wrong things. Instead of worrying about how they would be happy and move forward, they were worried about something that happened in a job that didn’t matter. It’s letting go of things that are dragging you down. JESS MILCETICH (EXPRESS)

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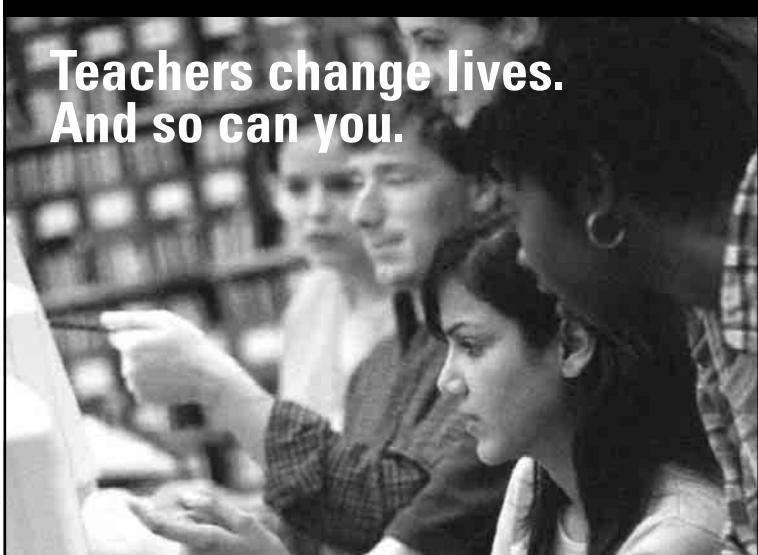
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Getting Ahead



At a lecture at George Mason University, Giselle of Elegant Hair by Giselle shows bridal hairdos on student Brittney Tobin.

Big Day Planner

A class teaches budgets, beauty and other aspects of the wedding biz

George Mason University students waited expectantly as the guest lecturer plugged in her curling iron. The topic on the syllabus: updos.

The stylist attached a mop of fake curls to sophomore Brittney Tobin's long blond hair, swept it up onto her head and pinned on a bridal veil. "Is there a veil on my head?" Tobin squeaked, wide-eyed, fluttering a hand in front of her face.

"It's every girl's dream to have a class about weddings," Tobin said later. Sure, a dream. Until the bride freaks out, the best man gets plastered or the altar boy topples over in the middle of the ceremony. And everyone expects you to fix it.

If there's one thing professor

Maggie Daniels wants students to know in her class on wedding planning — apparently, the first in the country at a four-year college — it's that this is not just fluff.

Daniels teaches crisis management and event planning for what has become an enormous business, estimated at anywhere from \$80 billion to \$161 billion per year nationally. Spending on weddings has nearly doubled in the past 15 years. In just four years, almost every expense increased more than 20 percent as people added days of events, gifts for all the guests, elaborate lighting and all sorts of other extras promoted by magazines, TV shows and the rest of the marital-industrial complex.

With that booming industry comes demand for wedding planners who know their peau de soie from their charmeuse, who can coordinate timing and flowers, music and hors d'oeuvres. And

who can, when the inevitable crisis hits, take the bullet.

"A wedding planner has to be a superhero," Tobin said. "People think of their wedding as the perfect fairy tale. If it's not, someone's going to get the blame. It's probably going to be you."

It wasn't easy to convince college administrators that this was a legitimate course of study, Daniels said. "I fought for this tooth and nail." She produced the event-planning and cultural research to back it up. Once approved, she needed 10 students to enroll. Seventy signed up.

This semester, 100 students are taking it. They're a mix of dreamy fiancees, people looking for a fun elective, tourism-and-events management majors rounding out their degree, and hard-core future wedding consultants.

"What happens very frequently is students come into class doe-eyed," Daniels said. "Part of my objective is

to make them understand it can be enjoyable, but the bottom line is, if you want to make a living at this, it is a hard job, a very, very hard job. Your weekends are taken away from you. You're dealing with a lot of different emotions," and it's difficult to launch a lucrative business.

Plus, the disasters.

When the class started in 2005, Daniels taught with wedding planner Carrie Loveless (no, really), and they couldn't find a textbook. So, they wrote their own, full of glossy photos of petals and fondant by a sought-after Washington wedding photographer, explanations of traditions in many different cultures, business advice and lots of examples of crises that really happened.

In some cases, the word "crisis" might be a tad overwrought (Omigod! No air conditioning in



Students at George Mason University learn about wedding planning, including upswept hairdos, in Maggie Daniels' class.

the limo! Sweaty bride!) Some are funny, if they didn't happen to you, like the time children at an outdoor reception ran past the three-tier wedding cake and knocked it right into the pool. Or the time the priest fell asleep while the quartet was playing and someone had to prod him awake.

Stephen Ball, who grew up working for a family catering business and is one of just two men in the class this semester, has seen it all. Once, while bartending at a reception out in the sticks somewhere, he watched a drunk and belligerent guest beat up two groomsmen and wound up taking the guy down in the parking lot. "Most of the guests ended up outside watching me hold this guy down," waiting for police to come, he said.

CONTINUED ON E10

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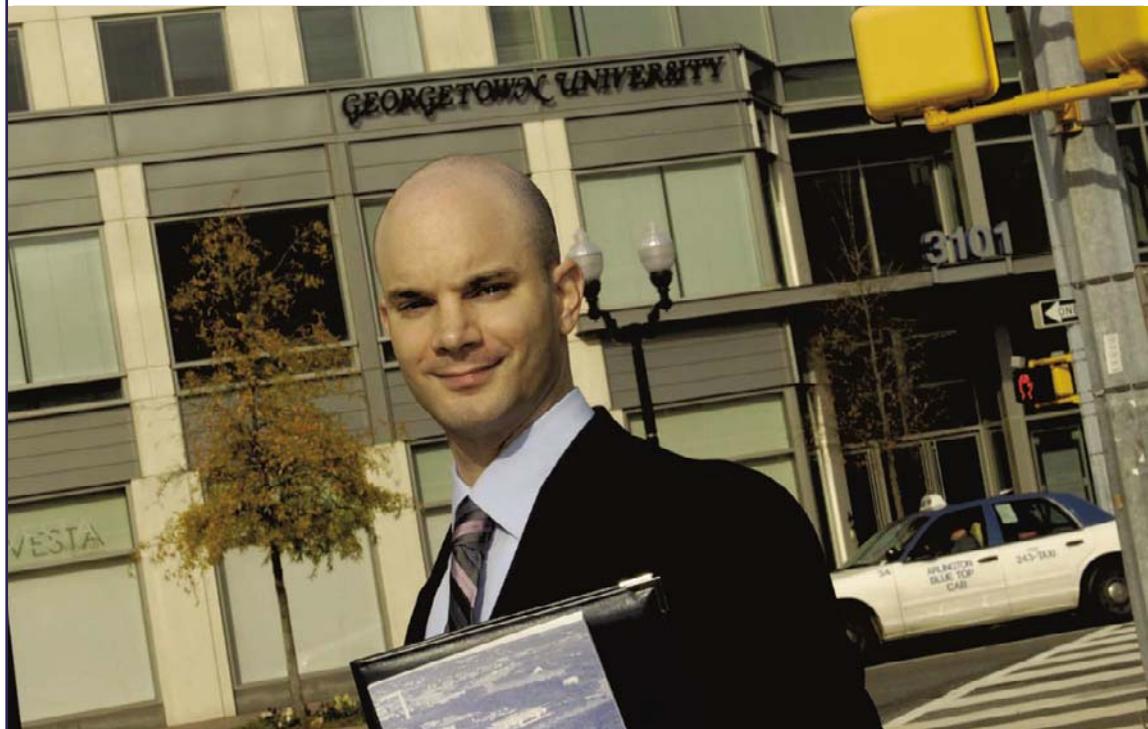
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SCHOOL OF CONTINUING STUDIES

Getting Ahead

Aisle Be There

CONTINUED FROM E9

Sometimes there are actual life-changing disasters. Like the wedding video, viewed by family and friends at the formal brunch the next day, that clearly showed footage of the groom stealing the father of the bride's wallet during the reception.

That wedding was annulled the next day, Daniels said.

Still, it's not organic chemistry in here.

While she teased a girl's hair, then smoothed it into a bun, stylist Giselle (No need for a last name. Please!) explained that she gets most requests for loose waves, buns and chignons. Students asked questions: Do brides ever hate the style? What do you do with short hair?

Daniels asked members of the class how they would handle various crises and led a discussion on religious traditions, then bridal makeup. "The order is: hair before makeup," she said. "Why would that be a good idea?" Students called out: because you could mess up the makeup with a blow dryer or hair spray.

"Some hair spray helps makeup stay on longer," a sophomore volunteered. "At pageants, they tell us to spray our face." Silence followed as people processed that information.

They broke into groups to work on their final projects, 100- to 150-page papers outlining an exhaustive wedding plan with real vendors, pricing, schedules, evaluation forms and business cards. In another class,

they had to create an imaginary client couple and draw a budget number out of a box. In this class, they had to pull out a last-minute crisis written on a slip of paper.

Tobin has had fun planning her group's winter-themed wedding, complete with a cake dusted with silver snowflakes. "I'm obsessed with cakes," Tobin said. Their crisis was a problem with linens: The wrong color and amount arrived on the wedding day. Tobin was unfazed. "But if it were the cake falling into the pool, I would be devastated."

Senior Kristin Discher was just looking for an easy class, but she has loved it so much she now plans to become a wedding planner. Her group got this: The groom's former girlfriend crashes the reception with four friends. "So, we're all brainstorming how horrible that would be," Discher said.

Ball didn't care about dresses, rings or flowers. He took on the nuts-and-bolts things he'd need to know if he were running a business, calling vendors and pricing things out on Web sites. The crisis his group drew was a groomsman stricken with flu. Whatever. Give him Tums, Ball said.

He prefers the crisis they invented themselves: The congressman's son finds out the week before the wedding, when he goes to get the license, that he's still married. He thought his quickie marriage to that bartender in Las Vegas had been annulled.

The most important thing he learned? "How to do an updo," Ball said. "No! Make that: what an updo is." SUSAN KINZIE (THE WASHINGTON POST)

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NET GAINS: Vocus employees watch as the company's CEO, Rick Rudman, returns a ball during a recent Ping-Pong game against the ruling champion, Greg Detlass, left.

NIKKI KAHN/WASHINGTON POST

Serving Up Job Perks

Software company employees avoid burnout by playing Ping-Pong at work

From the beginning, games have always been part of the work at software provider Vocus.

Co-founder and chief executive Rick Rudman remembers bringing in NERF balls, darts and a basketball hoop to hang over a garbage can. Back in the days of 100-hour workweeks, a game of pool in the office provided a small escape from the pressure of growing a start-up company.

But the pressure never really abated. In the early days, Rudman recalls, "If I looked out in the parking lot at 6 p.m. and there was nobody there, I would get annoyed."

Rudman's company has grown from a two-man shop in the base-

ment of a friend's home to a publicly traded company with offices in four countries and an estimated \$65 million in annual revenue. Over the years, Rudman says, he has learned that that breakneck pace isn't good for employees or a company.

Ten years ago, he and his partner, Bob Lentz, now head of technology, accepted an offer to sell the company they had nurtured. All the documentation was finished and they were sitting in their attorneys' office awaiting word that the wire transfer for the sale was complete. Instead, they got a call that the deal was off. That turned out to be a pivotal moment for the company.

The prospective buyer had intended to merge Vocus, which was selling the software it had designed to help grassroots groups organize their lobbying efforts, with a company that provided similar software to public relations firms.

With the deal canceled, Rudman

and Lentz decided to write their own public relations software and develop a platform to handle external communications for all kinds of clients. Within 90 days, the new software was developed. They launched it in 1997 at the annual meeting of the Public Relations Society of America, and sales took off.

Now the public relations software is growing so fast that Vocus' original product is just 20 percent of its business.

But even as the company has grown, it has worked hard to maintain the fun environment. Vocus funds an employee committee called It's All About You, which cooks up such regular diversions as breakfast bars, massage days, yoga classes and go-cart or paintball outings.

Quarterly meetings are followed by trips to Six Flags Great Adventure, Atlantic City or the

Chesapeake Bay, with hotel stays footed by the company.

Another committee, It's Not All About You, chooses charitable causes for the company to help. Next month, the committee is bringing a dunk tank to the office for an auction to benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters. High bidders will get to select executives or managers for dunkings. Rudman views this as a small price to pay for employees' goodwill and, ultimately, high productivity.

"The toys got more expensive, but the culture and atmosphere didn't change," he says. "It's an environment where people are treated like professionals and are expected to perform really well."

The company's fast growth has been accelerated by another decision, made eight years ago. Vocus had been selling traditional software but by 1999 was increasingly hearing from customers who want-

ed to access its program through the Web.

"We made a decision in two hours that would ultimately impact the long-term success of the company in our time," Rudman said. Because it was too expensive to offer software and a Web-based system, they converted the product to the latter. The move propelled the company's growth rate exponentially. Since going public in 2005, Vocus stock has tripled in value. The company had its first profitable year in 2006, with \$40.3 million in sales. Last month, it reported its 32nd consecutive quarter of revenue increases.

Its biggest competitor, the Swedish company Cision, had about \$300 million in annual revenue in 2006, but its growth rate slowed to about 4 percent last year. Other similar firms, such as PR Newswire, which has annual revenue of \$150 million to \$200 million, have been switching to online distribution systems that help public relations companies manage their news releases, media contacts and clips.

To keep up, Vocus regularly updates its online software and in June launched a service that lets customers incorporate clips from YouTube and other consumer video sites into news releases designed to get maximum hits on search engines. This month, Vocus launched Issues Wire, an online distribution service for news releases on political and public-interest issues.

With about 2,000 clients worldwide, Vocus estimates that its target market of about 300,000 businesses is worth about \$2.4 billion. That's a lot of opportunity, Rudman says. And a lot of work.

Even so, there are still plenty of play options at the company's Lanham headquarters — a pickup game of H-O-R-S-E on the basketball court in the middle of the office or the yearly miniature golf tournament that winds its way through the cubicles.

Last week, the annual Ping-Pong championship ended with the chief executive being unceremoniously trounced by the champion.

"The better thing to do is to give people an opportunity to balance work with personal lives and make sure they have time to do things they need to do," Rudman said. "Because, otherwise, they're just going to be thinking about that while they're at work."

ANITA HUSLI
(THE WASHINGTON POST)

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